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A HIDDEN GOSPEL

THE CAUSE OF

THE LOSS OF SOULS.

BEING THE SUBSTANCE OF A SERIES OF DISCOURSES ON THAT
IMPORTANT TEXT, 2 COR. IV. 3,—“ IF OUR GOSPEL
BE HID, IT IS HID TO THEM THAT ARE LOST.”

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THE LOSS OF SOULS.

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TO THE READER.

THIS little Treatise has been written for the glory of God in the desire to draw men to the Saviour, and to make believers "cleave to the Lord with full purpose of heart." The object of the Writer has been to set forth the simple elementary truth of the Gospel, the apprehension of which gives clearness of faith and assurance of hope; and to remove some of those false views or impressions that often interpose, as a dark cloud, between the soul and the blessed "Sun of Righteousness." The Reader will perceive that this Treatise only enters in part on the topics embraced in the text. The Writer, however, hopes, that if circumstances permit, he may be enabled to prosecute the enquiry still farther, and consider some of the causes existing in the sinner why the Gospel is often hid. Believing Reader, do pray with me that this little work may be owned of God in turning sinners from "darkness to light," and "from the power of Satan unto God," and to His name be all the glory.

PRE

WIT

TO THE CONGREGATION

THAT USUALLY ASSEMBLE IN THE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, AMHERSTBURGH,

THIS LITTLE TREATISE

Is Most Respectfully Dedicated,

WITH EARNEST PRAYER THAT, UNDER THE BLESSING OF GOD,
IT MAY BE INSTRUMENTAL IN THE

CONVERSION AND SANCTIFICATION OF SOULS.

BY THEIR VERY AFFECTIONATE

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A HIDDEN GOSPEL

THE CAUSE OF THE LOSS OF SOULS.

2 Cor. iv. 3.—“ If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost !”

MAN, since the fall, in relation to the government of God, is a rebel. He has violated the “ holy, just, and good law of his Creator and consequently exposed himself to its righteous, but awful penalty. In restoring such a being—one who is under the guilt of sin, and naturally in love with it, it is evident that two objects require to be accomplished. There must, in the first place, be some honourable ground, perfectly satisfactory to the supreme Lawgiver, on which He can remit the penalty, acquit the transgressor, and restore him to all the blessings connected with perfect obedience ; and, in the second place, there must be such an influence brought to bear on the mind and heart of the sinner, as will be fitted to win him back to love and obedience to God. A scheme that lacked either of these great requisites, would fail to accomplish the end contemplated.

Were it possible that there did exist any truth, or system of truths, or any other conceivable influence in the universe, fitted to restore man to love and obedience, yea, perfect obedience, yet were there no honourable or consistent ground on which the past transgressions of the sinner could be forgiven, it is evident that the sentence of exclusion from heaven would remain final

and eternal. Or, on the other hand, did there exist a suitable satisfaction to the holy government of God, grounded on which he could justify the guilty transgressor, yet were there no influence available in its sufficiency or adaptation to destroy the natural enmity of the human heart, and bring man into a state of reconciliation with God; however much the desire, on God's part, would be illustrative of His love and mercy, yet the object to be derived would still remain unaccomplished; the sinner would remain unsanctified, and consequently unsaved; for "without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."—Heb. xii. 14.

Let us bless God, however, and let the earth rejoice, that the Divine plan of mercy, whilst it contains a perfect and glorious satisfaction to God's law, also unfolds to man such an influence as is fitted to "restore his soul, and lead him in paths of righteousness"—Ps. xxiii. 3. And while the scheme, as a whole, is the grandest display of God's love, it also strikingly bears the impress of His wisdom, in the simplicity and verity of the arrangement: for such is its complex character, that the very same work or expedient which gives satisfaction to the divine moral administration, is the very instrument which, as a great truth, the Spirit employs to enlighten, convert, sanctify, and save the souls of men. That which removes the legal obstacle, on God's part, to man's salvation, is the very thing which, in its exhibition, is adapted to remove the moral obstacles on man's part. And thus it is, that although there is now an adequate atonement for the sins of men, the actual salvation of the sinner is not accomplished, till he come under the means intended to convert and save him. "He must come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved."—1 Tim. ii. 4.

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In a word, he must believe the Gospel. The Spirit employs Gospel truth as the only instrument to save. He may employ other truths in the word, to influence the soul, and the influence produced may correspond with the nature of the truth employed; but no other truth is saving truth, but Gospel truth. And, therefore, it follows, that "if the Gospel is hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Souls are in a lost state till they know the Gospel, and they will be finally and eternally lost if they do not come to a knowledge of the truth of the Gospel. And thus, also, it results, on the other hand, that those to whom the Gospel is known—those who come to the knowledge of the truth—are saved souls. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound."—Ps. lxxxix. 15.

Oh! how important that ministers, in preaching, be sure that they preach the Gospel—Christ's Gospel—the glorious Gospel of the grace of God.

My dear readers, do *you* know the Gospel? Are you sure it is the Gospel? Can you show, on God's authority, that what you are believing and trusting in, is the Gospel? Or are you yet in doubt, darkness, and perplexity? Be assured, then, that you are in a dangerous condition. Oh! throw not this little treatise aside, which has been written to guide you into "the way of peace," without making its subject a matter of deep concern. My heart's desire and prayer to God for you is, that you might be saved.

The passage of Scripture to which our attention is solicited, embraces three important considerations:

I. *What is the Gospel?*

II. *How the Gospel may be hid!*

III. *The awful consequence resulting from a hidden Gospel—souls are lost!*

SECTION I.

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

This is an inquiry that swallows up all other inquiries. It is one of everlasting importance. The mind of man cannot be directed to a subject of greater moment—of more vital consequence to his present and eternal well-being, than this. “What must I do to be saved?” is the most important question that man, as a sinner, can put. It is one very seldom put. There is nothing more common in the world, than asking questions; but it is far from being common to put this great question—to make the way of salvation an object of serious investigation—to be “seeking the Lord while he may be found.”—Isa. lv. 6.

1st. *Whatever the Gospel is, it is “good news.”* It is “glad tidings of great joy;” it brings “peace on earth, and good will to men.” The word “Gospel” is a Saxon compound, signifying “good news.” It is something fitted to give peace, to produce joy, to enkindle hope, to awaken holy love. It is “news;” something new, new in the history of the world, new in the history of the universe. It is a new feature in the moral government of God, a new manifestation of His infinite perfections. It is “news” in which all intelligent beings are more or less interested. Even the Godhead is deeply interested; it is called “the pleasure of the Lord,”—Isa. liii. 10;—“the Lord delighteth in mercy.” Holy beings who may have existed for ages prior to the creation of the world, and

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whose enlarged and enlarging capacities have been employed in the contemplation and enjoyment of God, regard the Gospel as news, wonderful news: "angels desire to look into these things." The Gospel has produced a "new song" in heaven.—Rev. v. 9. But more particularly it is "good news" to man, good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; it is a Gospel "for every creature;" therefore for you, oh! reader—yes! for *you*. Whatever the Gospel is, then, it is good news, fitted to occasion joy. Hence, "believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory." Hence, the Ethiopian Eunuch, when he believed, "went on his way rejoicing;" and the Philippian Jailor "rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house." Those, then, who imagine religion a gloomy thing, are sadly mistaken; and persons profess to have received Christ's Gospel and appear gloomy, censorious, and morose, be assured it is something else than religion that makes them so. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace," &c. The Gospel is the Gospel of peace, and by it "God fills us with all joy and peace in believing."—Rom. xv. 13.

2nd. *Whatever the Gospel is, the knowledge of it by the sinner is necessary to his salvation.* Our condition, as violators of God's law, exposes us to all the dreadful consequences of sin—eternal perdition. The Gospel makes known the only way of salvation. Faith in this Gospel is necessary to the possession and enjoyment of eternal life. Gospel truth, alone, can make us wise to salvation. "He that believeth, shall be saved; he that believeth not, shall be damned!" "Without faith, it is impossible to please God." If the Gospel be hid from us, we are lost: and thus did Christ weep over the lost state of Jerusalem sinners,

when he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying—"Oh! that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes."—Luke xix. 42. Hence, the importance of the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature"—Mark xvi. 15. Gospel truth is not like any kind of historical, political, moral, or philosophical truth, which we may or may not know without any particular detriment or benefit to our personal interests. It is either "a savour of life unto life, or of death unto death." Reader, do you know the truth?"

3rd. *Whatever the Gospel is, it is something very simple.* The word of God does not come to propound some problem for man's solution, and whoever is able to solve it shall be saved. It does not come with some high, abstruse, and intricate subject, requiring the grasp of mind of a Newton, the philosophic research of a Bacon, or the splendid imaginative powers of a Milton. It does not propose something requiring years of unremitting and laborious toil and study. The Gospel does not propose, as a question, "How shall man be just with God?" "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings; with calves of a year old? will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression—the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" The Gospel does not ask, but it answers the question. When man, as a condemned criminal, under the curse of God's law, is led to cry out under the pressure of an awakened conscience, "What must I do to be saved?"—how shall I escape the just judgment of God? it does not leave

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him to the varied and conflicting opinions of men ; it does not require him to rest on man's authority or judgment, to see who will make known the most reasonable theory ; who will devise the most ingenious expedient. No, no, blessed be God ! there is no such uncertainty—no such difficulty. The Gospel is the answer—not the question. God has solved the problem, executed the task, removed the difficulty, and the Gospel is the simple proclamation of what He has done, and what we are to believe. The Gospel is a development of God's wisdom—not man's ; and His wisdom is seen in its simplicity, and thus it is adapted to be preached to every creature, whatever their amount of intellectual or moral cultivation. Yea, even individuals who, when compared with others, may be termed "babes," have often rejoiced in the truth, when to the "wise and the prudent" the Gospel was still hid ; "out of the mouths of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Mat. xxi. 16. The Eunuch learned the Gospel from a conversation with Philip, in a chariot ; the Jailor, the same hour in which he cried out, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved ?" rejoiced, believing in God. Oh ! reader, are you thinking the Gospel something awfully intricate and abstruse ? Oh ! "who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth."—Gal. iii. 1.

4th, *Whatever the Gospel is, it is something very powerful.* "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," says the Apostle, "for it is the *power* of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." The preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness, but, to us who are saved, it is *the power* of God. It is not only "news," but it *makes new*. It transforms—renews. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.—2 Cor. v. 17. It is the great instrument employed by the Spirit in con-

version. Believers are begotten by "the word of truth;" they are born, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God; and this is the word which, by the Gospel, "is preached unto you." It is thus the Apostle says, "in Jesus have I begotten you through the Gospel."—1 Cor. iv. 15. The Gospel works *effectually* in those that believe. It turns "from darkness to light;" "from the power of Satan to God;" by faith of it we "pass from death unto life," from the bondage and servitude of Satan, "into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Reader, have you undergone this saving change, can you say, that whereas you "were once blind, now you see?" If you are yet unchanged, it is because you know not, you have not obeyed the Gospel.

5th, *Whatever the Gospel is, it cannot be believed without bringing the believer into a state of peace with God.* This is a truth clearly taught us in the Word of God; and not only taught us as a truth, but exemplified in the diversified experience of true believers mentioned in Scripture. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Some think that they know the Gospel, but all they want is faith to believe it; others think that they are believing the Gospel, but they have not peace with God. Both of these are mistakes. A man cannot know the Gospel to be true, without believing it. What you are believing is not the Gospel at all; it is something else. It may be something *near* the Gospel, *round about* the Gospel, or *like* the Gospel; it may be as like it as a painting is like the object painted; but the picture of anything is very different from the thing itself. The picture of a fire will not warm you; the picture of a loaf will not nourish you; the picture of a bag of gold will not enrich you:

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so a mere *picture* of the Gospel, something like it, will not enlighten, convert, and save you. You must believe *the Gospel*; you must "know the joyful sound;" you must know that it is no mere theory, no mere abstraction; but *a reality*, a glorious and gracious *truth*. You may have a perception of what the Gospel is, but you may not believe it to be true. You may have an apprehension of it, as you would of some of the doctrines of the Koran, were you to study them, but you fail to realize it as *truth*—*infallible truth*. You do not see your vileness as a sinner, your condemnation as a criminal, your danger as exposed to the infliction of the wrath of God, and, consequently, you realize not, a *real Gospel*

6th, *Whatever the Gospel is, there is only ONE.*
 "One name given under heaven and among men, whereby we may be saved;" one "door" by which we enter; one "way" in which we must walk; one refuge to which to flee; one "fountain open for sin and uncleanness;" one "foundation" on which to build; "one Mediator between God and man;" "one sacrifice" that can take away sin; one "High Priest passed into the heavens, who ever liveth to make intercession for us;" one Shepherd, who is "the chief Shepherd," "the great Shepherd of the sheep," "the good Shepherd, who giveth his life for the sheep." In a word, there is but *one Gospel*, it is *THE Gospel*; the Gospel of God; the Gospel of the grace of God; the glorious Gospel of Christ. Paul and Timothy, who send this Epistle, call it *our Gospel*—"if *our Gospel* be hid." You recollect how deeply the heart of the Apostle was stirred when at one time he suspected that some of the Galatians were likely to be drawn aside to another Gospel, "which is not another," adds he. There are *not two*. Another

Gospel is a false Gospel, and a false Gospel is no Gospel ; therefore, in removing to another Gospel, they were removing to no Gospel, for there is not another. (See Gal. i. 7, 8, 9.) Man is apt to believe a lie ; to be influenced by Satan's devices. If, in a state of innocency, he was led to believe the Serpent, and disbelieve God, O, how prone is he now to be "led captive by him at his will," when the heart, as well as Satan, is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. O, remain not, then, in darkness ; rest not on a mere presumption or a peradventure. Do you know *the Gospel*—the only Gospel ? Are you sure it is *the Gospel*, and nothing else ? Have you "received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God ?" Are you satisfied that it is not merely this or that man's opinion, but that it is *God's truth*, and that, in believing it, "you have set to your seal that God is true?"—John iii. 33. Do you take it as if fresh from the lips of God, "as if God did beseech, and CHRIST prayed you, be ye reconciled to God ?"—2 Cor. v. 20.

Were the question to be put to each individual of our large congregations who may have often heard the word of God, What is the Gospel ? a great variety of answers would probably be given, not at all agreeing one with another. One would answer one thing, and another, another. But there are not *twenty* Gospels, nay, there are not *two* ; and the same Gospel by which one is saved, must be the same by which any other must be saved, and therefore they must know *the Gospel*—the same Gospel, and will be "ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in them."—1 Peter iii. 15. All that know the Gospel will be able to tell what the Gospel is ; they will give an intelligent answer of the ground of their hope for

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eternity. Bring a true believer from the north, or from the south, from Lapland, or Madagascar, or the South Seas, or China, or Central Africa, as well as from the more enlightened parts of Europe or America ; question them from the richest to the poorest, from the greatest in rank to the meanest, from the most learned to the most unlettered, whether from the frigid or the tropical zone ; ask those who know the Gospel, and they will give a similar answer. Each may use his own words, idioms, phraseology, but the Gospel will be seen and expressed in all. I have no doubt, for all that some have read and heard of Divine truth, and who take for granted that they believe in the Bible, that they are yet ignorant of the Gospel. It often happens, as has been attested by facts, that to some who have been regular at church on Sabbaths, frequent at the communion table, occasionally or regularly at prayer meetings, consistent as moral men, and even looked up to as religious men, yet, after years in this course, when they were saying "peace, peace," and thinking all was well, yet the Gospel has been a hidden Gospel. They thought they were believing, and so they were, but it was not the simple gospel ; and yet, when they have come to know the truth, the truth that "sets free"—John viii. 32—they have received it as something *new*, as "good news ;" they had not known it before ; they were looking to and trusting to something else. It came to them with all the freshness of something *new*, and all the importance of something that was *real*.

Does not the occurrence of such cases teach us a most serious lesson, and propose a most solemn inquiry ? If such instances do occur (and that they do, cannot be questioned), if persons who have long sat under the teaching of the church, and been received as members,

and regarded as moral and even religious, if they, by coming to the knowledge of the truth, practically own that they were in darkness and under condemnation, O, surely it speaks loudly to vast multitudes, in professedly Christian churches, who have a name to live and are dead (Rev. iii. 1), who seem "ever learning but never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. iii. 7), who live in continued perplexity and doubt, and would be puzzled to say what they are really believing! Is not the inquiry solemnly enforced, Do I know the Gospel—the Gospel by which alone sinners are saved? O, reader, have you considered what you are believing, not what you are presuming upon or taking for granted, but what you are truly believing; is it the Gospel, or is it not? Is it the same Gospel Paul preached, and by believing in which he was saved? Is it Christ's Gospel? "Examine yourself whether ye be in the faith, prove yourself, know ye not yourself how that Christ Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobate."—2 Cor. xiii. 5.

7th, *Whatever the Gospel is, it is not ANY or EVERY truth in the Bible.* The Bible is, indeed, the only authoritative exhibition of Gospel truth, it is chiefly for this purpose it is given to us; it is in it that the Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to us, John xvi. 14. But it is not *any* truth that is Gospel truth. There are many of the statements of Scripture that are simply historical, preceptive, promissory, &c., and it is not the belief of *any* one of them that is saving faith. Nor does Gospel truth comprehend *every* truth in the Scriptures. If it did, who would really believe the Gospel? Who could say that he really knows every statement contained in the Bible? How long would it take for a man to know the Gospel, and even, after years of unremitting toil, could he say that he knew every

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truth in the somewhat voluminous book—the Bible? The Gospel, we are to believe, is essentially the same that all believers in every age of the world believed, and there are vast portions of the Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments, about which the Patriarchs and Prophets could know nothing. Besides, how could the Eunuch know the Gospel in a brief conversation with Philip in the chariot, and the Jailor learn it in an hour, and the three thousand at the day of Pentecost in a day, Acts ii. 41, if the Gospel included *every* truth in the Scriptures?

It is necessary that we distinguish the Gospel from other truths or facts that surround the Gospel, or are connected with it. For example, in Rom. iii. 23, it is stated, "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;" but that is not the Gospel; it is entirely distinct from it. In Gal. iii. 10, it is said, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them." Here, then, is our condition, we are sinners; here is our condemnation, we are cursed; but that is not the Gospel, and believing this truth will not save us. This is no good news; it is truth fitted to agitate and alarm. If you were confined in a dungeon, and under sentence of death, and waiting the day of execution, the knowledge of this would be no good news to you; it would fill you with dismay and despair. There are a great many truths in the Bible intimately connected with the Gospel; they are important for us to know, but they are not all the Gospel. We are first to believe the Gospel, the Gospel by which we are begotten again, and thus, "being born again," "as new-born babes, we are to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may *grow* thereby."—1 Peter ii. 2.

O, reader, do not be contented with knowing *any* of

the truths of the Bible, see that it is Gospel truth ; and do not suppose that before you can be a believer you must know every truth.

8th, *Whatever the Gospel is, it is a message addressed to mankind-sinners alone, and therefore cannot be received as such by any other intelligent beings in the universe.* Gospel truth is not truth existing in the world, arising out of the relationship of moral beings to the Great Lawgiver. It is not some attribute in the Divine character, or some truth more latent among the glories of the Godhead, that required only deeper investigation or growing enlargement of capacity for angels or archangels to discover. Gospel truth is not even a truth that required merely a simple word or sentiment from the unfathomable depths of the Divine Wisdom. The Godhead does not reveal it simply in the character of an instructor, though infinite in knowledge. No ! Gospel truth is a "new creation,"—Eph. ii. 10, 2 Cor. v. 17—a creation that required more than the simple fiat of the Almighty voice ; it required, on the part of the Godhead, toil and suffering, ignominy and agony. Apart from this there is no Gospel truth. Gospel truth thus partakes of a historical character. It has reference to a great work—a great event ; take *that* away, and there is no truth in the universe fitted to save a single soul. Gospel truth is no mere theory, it is no abstraction, it is a great fact ; a real event, apart from which it has no abstract or separate existence.

There are many truths which man, in common with other intelligent creatures, may know, and may grow in the knowledge of them. This is strikingly set forth by James (ii. 19.) in reference to the great truth, that there is one living and true God, when he says, "Thou believest that there is one God ; thou doest well ; the

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devils also believe and tremble." Saving faith is something else than this. Again, we are told in Mark i. 23, 26, of an unclean spirit that cried out on seeing Christ, "Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth; art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art—the Holy One of God." Here was a knowledge of Christ, here was an acknowledgment of his Holiness and his Divinity. The unclean spirit believed all this; and this shews us that angels and devils may believe much in reference to the Gospel; but the great truths of his Gospel is something that mankind-sinners are to receive, and it cannot be received in the same way by angels in heaven, or by devils in hell, because it is not addressed as good news to them. Holy beings in heaven may see, and no doubt do see, in the Gospel scheme, a great and new manifestation of the Divine glory which excites their admiration, increases their love, and strengthens their obedience.—Eph. iii. 10. Fallen spirits in the place of woe, may see, and do see in it a great exhibition of God's power, wisdom, and love, in controlling and counteracting their own malicious designs, and putting limits to the inroads and extension of rebellion in the universe. "The seed of the woman bruised the head of the serpent.—Gen. iii. 15. But O, fellow-sinner, Gospel truth is fit to save you, and it is not fit to save devils; it is the power of God to salvation, to every one that believeth. O, then, believe and live, there is something in it intended and fitted for sinners of mankind, and fitted and intended for none else, and every believer enjoys its power, its blessing and its grace.

This brings the great question before us,—What is the Gospel? within narrower limits; nay, to the very point. This tends to distinguish it from other truths that may or

may not be connected with it, whether in nature or revelation. This brings us to the great elementary or essential truths of the Gospel. What, then, is the Gospel? O, fellow-sinner, if you know it not, if you cannot answer the question, listen to God's word. *It answers the question; "Hear and your soul shall live."*—Isaiah lv. 3.

THE QUESTION, WHAT IS THE GOSPEL? ANSWERED.

PAUL ANSWERS THE QUESTION.

He answers it *for himself*, when he says, Gal. ii. 20, "The life I now live in the flesh, is a life of faith on the SON OF GOD WHO LOVED ME AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR ME." But Paul was not merely a believer, but a preacher of the Gospel and an Apostle. Now, let us hear what Paul preached to *others*, as well as believed for *himself*; because the Gospel is "for every creature." The question is answered by the Apostle.

1 Cor. xv. 1, 4. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you, THE GOSPEL which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand, by *which* now *ye are saved*, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you, *first* of all, that which I also received; *how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures*, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." Now, here is something that neither angels nor devils can believe. They cannot say, Christ died for *our* sins; but we can say so. He died for our sins, and in so doing, he has made a perfect satisfaction to God's law and government,

so that God can and does remit the penalty of the law to every sinner that believes in what Christ has done and suffered for him, and who is thus led to see the honourable and safe way in which the infinitely Holy God can receive guilty and polluted beings into favour and fellowship, and restore them to the blessings connected with perfect personal obedience. Nor is it true, merely, that Christ died for the sins of believers, else we might ask, what Gospel did they believe, and by believing which, they became believers? and still farther, what Gospel would we have to address to unbelievers?—a Gospel which must be true before it is believed, and, in order to be believed, and will be true, even although it should be rejected and disobeyed. But, observe, this Gospel was what Paul preached *first* of all—the first chief truth which he made known when he went among the Corinthians. He did not wait till they believed, before he says, Christ died for our sins, but he made known this as the Gospel which he *first* preached, and those that believed it were saved. Hear, then, O fellow-sinners, the Gospel, Christ died for *our* sins; yes, for ours; for *yours*, O, reader, and for *mine*; believe and live; believe and rejoice. Is not this good news?—glad tidings of great joy? Here is a truth to us, and to no other beings in the universe; none in heaven, or in the place of wo, can say what we can say—Christ died for *our* sins. Here, then, is the elementary truth of the Gospel. And here let me point you to the remarks of the great Luther, which are very appropriate here:—“But weigh diligently every word of Paul, and especially mark well this pronoun *our*; for the effect altogether consisteth in the well applying of the pronouns, which we find very often in the Scriptures; wherein, also, there is ever some vehemency and power. Thou wilt easily say and believe

that Christ, the Son of God, was given for the sins of Peter, of Paul, and of other saints, whom we account to have been worthy of this grace ; but it is a very hard thing that thou who judgest thyself unworthy of this grace, shouldst, from thy heart, say and believe, that Christ was given for thine invincible, infinite, and horrible sins. * * * Learn this definition diligently, and especially so exercise this pronoun *our*, that this one syllable being believed, may swallow up all thy sins ; that is to say, that thou mayest know assuredly, that *Christ hath taken away the sins, not of certain men only, but also of thee* ; yea, and of the whole world. Then, let not thy sins be sins only, but even thy own sins indeed ; that is, to wit, believe thou that Christ was not only given for *other men's sins*, but also for *thine*. Hold this fast, and suffer not thyself, by any means, to be drawn away from this most sweet definition of Christ, which rejoiceth even the very angels in heaven."

Again, Paul answers the question in 2 Cor. v. 20, 21 : "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us ; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." God is seeking to reconcile the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. God beseeches sinners, and Christ prays them, be ye reconciled to God. Now observe the ground on which this is effected ; for he, (that is God) hath made *Him* who knew no sin (that is Christ) to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God *in him*. Christ took our sin and we are to take his righteousness. All our own righteousness is but as filthy rags (Is. lxiv. 6.) ; but here is Christ's righteousness, a perfect righteousness ; we are treated and regarded

by God as perfect in Christ, by faith in Christ we are accepted *in the Beloved*.—Eph. i. 6. O, believe, then, in what Christ has done for you—has become for you—yes, for *you*, O, sinner, however vile, and guilty, and hell-deserving you are, and you will be received by the Father for his Son's sake: you will be made "the righteousness of God in Him." Is not this "good news" for poor, perishing sinners, such as we. "Believe, then, in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."—Acts xvi. 31.

Listen still farther to the same Gospel by Paul, Gal. i. 3, 4.—"Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and *our Lord Jesus Christ who gave himself for our sins*, that he might deliver us from this present evil world." Here is the good news—Christ gave himself for our sins, and if you look to what follows, you will perceive that the Apostle immediately proceeds to express his grief and surprise, that they should be at all likely to remove from this Gospel to another Gospel, which is not another, for there is no other.

Again, Titus ii. 13, 14, "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and *our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us*, that he might redeem us from all iniquity."

Again, Eph. v. 2, "*Christ hath loved us, and hath given himself for us on offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour.*"

Still farther, listen to the "good news."—1 Tim. i. 15. "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*, of whom I am chief." How wide the word "sinners," how co-extensive with the whole human family. Christ's mission has an aspect of love towards the whole world; Christ's fullness is adequate to the wants of the whole

world: he came to save sinners. Who are sinners? "*All have sinned*," is the reply of Scripture, and the whisper of conscience is its echo. O, reader, are not you a sinner? You are, and therefore Christ's work is sufficient for *you*; *you* may rest on it, *you* may build on it. It is a rock strong enough on which to rest all your hopes, and broad enough for *you*—yes, for *you*.

Again hear the Gospel: 1 Tim. ii. 1—6.—The Apostle exhorts that prayers should be made for all men, for Kings, &c. "For" says he, ver. 3, "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man *Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.*" We are, then, to pray for all. Why? Because God desires the salvation of all; and therefore, you, O, reader. And how do we know that he will have all men to be saved? Because Christ gave himself a ransom for all. O, listen, then, to the "good news:" there is a Saviour for you; there is a ransom paid for you; there has been precious blood shed for you; for we are not redeemed with corruptible things such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. —1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

"The good news" is still farther made known by the great Apostle of the Gentiles, in 2 Cor. v. 14. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if *one died for all*, then were all dead, and *that he died for all*, that they who live should not henceforth live to themselves, but unto *him who died for them*, and rose again. The Apostle states in this chapter, that *all* must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now, all are spiritually dead: all are naturally under condemnation—under sentence of death. He knows

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and states this, not merely because sin is so universal, but he knows it, and infers it from the general aspect of Christ's work and death; he judges that all are dead, because Christ died for all. The greatness of the remedy pre-supposes the greatness of the disease, the universality of the remedy pre-supposes the universality of the disease. "If Christ died for all, then all were dead." This is our condition as sinners, we are dead—"dead in trespasses and sins." How, then, do we live: how do we get spiritual life? By believing the Gospel of our salvation; by believing in what Christ has done in dying for us; by seeing the perfect atonement which he has made for our sins. We deserve to *die*, but *he died* for us; we were cursed, but he became a curse for us, and thus by believing in him, we are justified; there is now no condemnation to us, being in Christ Jesus. We live by faith of the Son of God who loved us, and gave himself for us—Gal. ii. 20. iii. 13. Or, as our Saviour says, John v. 24, 25. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is *passed from death to life*. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the *dead* shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear *shall live*." The Saviour, in this passage, is not referring to the general resurrection of the bodies of men, he refers to this in the subsequent verses 28, 29; but he is speaking of the influence of Gospel truth on the souls of men, by which they "are quickened;" "made alive from the dead;" "rise to newness of life;" "become new creatures;" "are born again," and are represented in the passage before us as *living*, that they who *live* should not henceforth live to them-

selves, but to *Him who died for them* and rose again.—Fellow-sinner, have you yet believed? Do you see the love of God *to* you, and the death of Christ *for* you? If so, you are no longer dead, you are alive to God through Jesus Christ. O, live to Him who died for you. Are you yet in unbelief? You are dead, under condemnation, exposed to the wrath to come. Believe that Christ has made a perfect satisfaction to the love of God; see that he died for all, therefore, for you, and believing, you will have peace and joy.

Again, read the "good news" in Rom. iii. 24, 25, "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in *Christ Jesus, whom* God hath set forth to be a *propitiation, through faith in his blood*, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." Again, iv. 23—25, "Now it was not written for his sake alone (viz., Abraham's), that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom *it* (that is, righteousness or justification) will be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus from the dead, *who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*"

Once more. Read the "good news," so strikingly implied in the triumphant exclamation of believers. Rom. viii. 33, 34, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ that died*, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is ever at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." Who is there that will condemn the believer, sinner though he has been? Will any angel that has kept his first estate

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stand up and say, "you are a sinner, you have no right to enter heaven, to enjoy the blessings connected with perfect obedience?" The believer can exclaim, it is all true, I have sinned—I deserve not to be here; but I am not here at the expense of law; I enter here with a *perfect* righteousness, a *finished* and an *everlasting* righteousness, Dan. ix. 24. Sinner though I am, yet who is he that condemneth? CHRIST DIED. Christ loved me and gave himself for me; and angels as well as saints will join in the *new song*, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour and glory, dominion and blessing for ever and ever, Rev. v. 9—12. Will any devil in hell stand up at the great day of accounts, and when the Judge says to believers, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world," Matt. xxv. 34, will he cry out, "Hold, hold, these have sinned, these have merited hell." O hear the triumphant exclamation that magnifies God's law—satisfies God's justice—vindicates God's attributes—"Who is he that condemneth? *It is Christ that died.*" Christ has died, and died for us, and therefore we live—we have eternal life. "Not unto us, not unto us, but unto thy name, O Lord, be all the glory," Ps. cxv. 1. O sinner, there is nothing between you and an eternal hell but the work of Christ; nothing between saints in heaven and eternal perdition, but the death of Christ; nothing throughout eternity, but what Christ has done in dying for us. There is no other plea—no other confidence—no other ground of boasting, but this, "it is Christ that died." Now Christ's death is sufficient for you, O sinner, yes, for you; he came to save sinners; he gave his life a ransom for all; he died for all, 2 Cor. v. 14, 15. There is no proper reason why you should not acknowledge and

believe the validity of Christ's work—appropriate its benefits—rejoice in its blessings—employ it as an unanswerable plea, yea, as your plea, and your only plea; and that though Satan rages, “hell opens her mouth,” the world sneers, the wicked scoff, though your own heart would give vent to dark suspicions, and your conscience would be like to accuse, and your sins seem like mountains, yet, in the face of a frowning world, an accusing conscience, and a yawning hell, you will triumphantly exclaim, “Who is he that condemneth? *it is Christ that died.*” “To him that loved me and washed me in his own blood, to him be dominion and blessing for ever and ever. Amen.”

It is thus Paul answers great questions. Many other passages might be cited. For example, Rom. v. 6—8. “For when we were without strength, in due time *Christ died for the ungodly*, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, *Christ died for us.*” Heb. ix. 26, “But now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin *by the sacrifice of himself.*”

THE APOSTLE PETER ANSWERS THE QUESTION.

1 Pet. ii. 21—24, “For even hereunto were ye called; because *Christ also suffered for us.* . . . Who his own self *bore our sins* in his own body on the tree.” Also, iii. 18, “*For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us to God.” 2 Pet. i. 1, “Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, *through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.*” And

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while the Apostle thus states the great elementary truth of the gospel, he also shows its sufficiency for all as implied in the statement, 2 Pet. iii. 9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Here, then, fellow-sinner, see the only ground of your acceptance before God. It is not, and cannot be anything but what Christ has done and suffered for you. Believe and live.

THE APOSTLE JOHN ANSWERS THE QUESTION.

1 John ii. 1, 2, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and *he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world:*" iv. 9, 10, "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and *sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*"

Attend carefully to that important passage in chap. v. 10--12, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made *him a liar.*" Now, observe the reason why he makes God a liar. "Because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." But does any one ask, But what is the record? John replies, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." Do you say, What! are we to believe that God hath given to us eternal life? Assuredly, this is the record, by not believing which we make God a liar, and any doubt or unbelief in regard to this is an impeachment of God's veracity. The record

is, "God hath given to us," to us sinners, eternal life; that is, he has made a gift of it to us. He actually offers this great boon—offers it gratuitously—"without money and without price;" and he tells us how to get it—"this life is in his Son." It is bestowed in and through Christ, and this accords with what Paul says, "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord," Rom. vi. 23. We are to receive and enjoy this gracious and glorious gift by receiving Christ, as it is God's procedure in grace, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not life;" or, in other words, "God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life; and he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16; "yea, is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God."—John iii. 18 and 36. Sinner, you deserve death; "the wages of sin is death."—Rom. vi. 23. God is now making you an offer; a great offer. He tells you how to receive the offer: it is by believing in Christ; believing in what he has done for you. O believe and live. If you believe not, you are making God a liar. O how truly does John's gospel accord with Peter's and with Paul's; it is the same gospel you must believe, and by which you will be saved.

JOHN THE BAPTIST ANSWERS THE GREAT QUESTION.

He came to prepare the way of the Lord, Matt. iii. 3. He preached the baptism of repentance, Acts xiii. 24. And thus we are told of the multitudes—"they were baptized of him in Jordan, *confessing their sins.*" This acknowledgment of guilt was preparing the way for a Saviour. The Spirit first convinces of sin.—John xvi. 9. This was the true method to lead them to Christ. Reader,

do you confess that you are a sinner; that you are "guilty before God."—Rom. iii. 19. Listen, then, to the good news made known by John "before he fulfilled his course."

John i. 29, The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world;" and verses 35, 36, Again the next day after, John stood and two of his disciples, and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, "*Behold the Lamb of God.*" Here, then, is a sacrifice of God's providing, one of infinite value; here is "the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Here is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.—Rev. xiii. 8. It is a sacrifice that can take away *sin*—not mere ceremonial pollution; it does not merely sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, Heb. ix. 13, but it takes away sin—actual guilt. But what sin? Whose sin is it valid to remove? John answers, "*the sin of the world.*" Therefore, O reader, it is sufficient for you. Here is precious blood for you; a sacrifice for you. O come to his sacrifice; confess over it your guilt. Believe that it is offered for you, and that it is accepted for you, and you will enjoy peace with God. Observe it says *sin*. Now, it does not say what kind of sin, whether great or small. No, it is the generic term *sin*; and, therefore, though your sin be as mountains, though "red as crimson," by beholding the great sacrifice, they will all be taken away. Thus does John the Baptist preach the gospel; the same gospel as Paul, who says, Heb. ix. 26, "but now once in the end of the world hath he (Christ) appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" and as Peter, "we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—1 Peter i. 19.

THE ANGEL ANSWERS THE GREAT QUESTION.

Luke ii. 10, 11, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people, for unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord." Unto you is born a Saviour. Not merely to you shepherds—to you Jews; but the tidings are for all people. Therefore, I say to you, O reader, there is a Saviour born for you. There is "a Captain of salvation;" and he was "made perfect through suffering."—Heb. ii. 10. It was not merely his being born that constituted him a Saviour, but he became perfect as a Saviour by what he suffered. He could not save us without suffering for us. But he did suffer, and now he is "mighty to save."—Isa. lxiii. 1. See, then, this perfect Saviour, "perfect through suffering." To you there is a Saviour born.

THE ANCIENT PROPHETS ANSWER THE QUESTION.

Isaiah liii. 5, He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. Verse 6, The Lord hath laid on him the iniquities of us all. Verse 8, For the transgression of my people was he stricken. Verse 11, By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.

Daniel ix. 24, Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Verse 26, And after threescore

and two weeks shall *Messiah be cut off, but not for himself.*

OUR BLESSED SAVIOUR ANSWERS THE QUESTION.

The Apostle, after mentioning the great cloud of witnesses, comes at last to the Saviour, and tells us, as we run, to keep "looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith."—Heb. xii. 2. Let us, then, hear the Great Teacher; Him who is at once the High Priest and the sacrifice, and also our Great Prophet.

John iii. 14, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." O how remarkable for simplicity the words of Christ. We are bitten by Satan, the old serpent: we are subject to everlasting death; but Christ has been lifted up. What is meant by this? Hear the explanation elsewhere in Scripture. John xii. 32, 33, "Now I, if I be lifted up from the earth will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die." The meaning, then, is—By Christ's being lifted up, *i. e.*, by Christ's dying, by what he does for sinners in dying for them, "whosoever believeth shall not perish." It is the same Gospel which Paul preached, "Christ died for our sins."

But observe the next verse, 16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." Can anything be plainer? Do you not see yourself, O reader, in that wide word "world," and that impartial word "whosoever."

But we cannot multiply passages. It is in pointed emphasis to the absolute necessity of *his obedience unto death* as the ground of our salvation, and the indispen-

sable necessity of faith in him on the part of the sinner, that he gives such striking figurative representations of the truth. "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever, and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world"—John vi. 51. I am the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life—viii. 12. I am the door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved—x. 9. I am the good shepherd and know my sheep, and am known of mine—ver. 14. I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die—xi. 25, 26. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing—xv. 5. I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me—xiv. 6. Oh! how true it is, then, and what good news it is for poor perishing sinners, that Christ, in what he is and has done for them, is held up to them as "light" for them, "life" for them; a source and support of spiritual fruitfulness to them; "a way to the Father" for them, a "door" to heaven for them, a "good shepherd" for them. Oh! dear fellow-sinner, the word of God holds Him up to you as such. He holds Himself up as all this for you; will you come to Him, burdened and guilty as you are; or will you force Him, with tears of pity, to exclaim: Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life?—John v. 40. O, that thou hadst known, in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace, but now they are hid from thine eyes.—Luke xix. 42. How often would I have gathered you, as a hen gathereth her

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THE GOSPEL ESSENTIALLY THE SAME IN ALL DISPENSATIONS.

The Gospel by which we are saved, is essentially the same in all dispensations. The great object of revealed truth is to set Christ forth to the attention of the sinner. Gospel truth seeks, by shewing that Christ has been lifted up—that is, by what death he died, John xii. 32, 33: “to draw all men to him.” It seeks that Jesus Christ be “evidently set forth before our eyes, crucified among us.” Gal. iii. 1. Christ is the great Sun—the central orb; all divine truth radiates from Him, as the great centre, and around Him, as the great object. But it is not merely to Jesus, in the two-fold aspect of His character, as God and man, as once humbled and now exalted, once crucified and now glorified. Though these are both prominently brought before our attention, and require to be viewed unitedly; yet there is a prominence in the Scriptures to the *death* of Christ, as that which is to draw the sinner’s attention, and the great foundation of his acceptance before God. It is not so much His life, as His death; His example, as His atonement, His glory, as His cross. All dispensations harmonize in this—all Divine truth concentrates and converges towards this great point. The former dispensations looked forward to this—the new dispensation looks back to it. To all there is a common centre—there is but one foundation. It is thus that our Saviour, after His resurrection, in upbraiding his disciples for unbelief, says, “O, fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these

things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke xxiv. 25-27. It is thus Paul, as well as the other Apostles, could say, "I continue witnessing, both to small and to great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.—Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

Look to the first promise made to our first parents. That first ray of hope in the darkness of despair was a ray from that same Sun of righteousness, that has now arisen with healing under his wings.—Mal. iv. 2. Christ, in bruising the head of the serpent, was to have his heel bruised by the serpent. Here was a pointed reference to Christ's sufferings. If we look to the whole system of sacrifices, we shall see there is a pointed and emphatic reference to what Christ did in dying for us. He is the Lamb of God—the great sacrificial victim provided by God for the sins of men. Whether we look to sacrifices under the patriarchal dispensation, when they might be presented by any person, at any place, or at any time; or under the Mosaic, when they were restricted to particular persons, places, and times, we see a pointed prospective allusion to the same great truth. It is thus that it is not merely what is written in the prophets, but the emblematic or typical *language* of sacrifices that made the whole of the former economy converge to the great essential truth of the Gospel. That prophecy harmonizes in the same great end, has been seen in the extracts we have already made; and this is still farther beautifully seen, in the case of Philip and the Eunuch. The man of Ethiopia,

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as he sat in his chariot, read *Esaias the Prophet*. The particular passage is mentioned: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb, dumb before his shearer, so he opened not his mouth; in his humiliation, his judgment was taken away; and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.—*Acts viii. 32, 33.* We are told that Philip opened his mouth, and began at that same Scripture, and preached unto him *Jesus*. He did not need to begin elsewhere, but he began at the same Scripture; and, surely, in preaching *Jesus* from that Scripture, there was prominent importance to His death, and what he did in dying.

The same prominence to the same great truth, is seen in the great subject-matter of John the Baptist's discourse: "Behold the Lamb of God!" We see it, too, most strikingly exhibited by our Saviour. His own death stood out before His own mind with that prominence which it occupies in the scheme of grace. The great sign that was to be given, was to be the sign of *Jonas*: For as *Jonas* was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.—*Mat. xii. 40.* It was thus He was led to say: I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.—*Luke xii. 50.* And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me: this spake He, signifying what death He should die.—*John xii. 33.* Yea, even at that important period, when on the mount of transfiguration, when "His face was as the sun," and "His raiment white and glistening, behold there talked with Him two men, which were *Moses and Elias*, who appeared in glory, and *spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.*" It is thus that the period of His sufferings is designated with marked peculiarity—

"the hour"—"His hour." Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but *for this cause* came I unto this hour.—John xii. 27. Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son, &c.—xvii. 1. Did not the quaking earth, and the rending rocks, and the darkened sun, and the opening graves, proclaim that "this was the hour and the power of darkness?"

Do not the preaching and Epistles of the Apostles concentrate to the same great truth? The preaching of "His Gospel," and the preaching of "the Cross," are the same, as seen in 1 Cor. i. 17, 18. Paul was determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and Him crucified. God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Gal. vi. 14. He preached, first of all, *how that Christ died for our sins*.—1 Cor. xv. 3.

It has seemed fitting to the wisdom of God not to do away entirely with emblematical exhibitions of the truth, so long as we live by faith, and not by sight; and this shall continue till grace give place to glory, till we see "God face to face," and enjoy the blessedness of the beatific vision. Even under the new and better dispensation, we have emblematic rites or institutions. We have two important rites, baptism and the Lord's supper. Now, observe the important design of the latter, as stated by Paul, 1 Cor. xi. 26. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death until he come." There is a striking unity of design between this ordinance and the whole system of revealed truth. There is a wonderful harmony between it and the ancient sacrifices. They speak essentially the same language; they point to the same great truth, the one retrospectively, the other prospectively. The broken bread, and poured out wine, direct to the same truth to

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which the shed blood of the lamb, or the goat, or the bullock, pointed. The sacrifice of old could not, in itself, take away sin—real guilt.—Heb. x. 4. Neither does the observance of the Lord's supper, merely as a rite, take away sin now. But they both point to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin; they both point to that "blood which cleanseth from all sin." And the spiritual worshipper of old as really needed to look through the type to the great sacrifice typified, in order to realize actual pardon, as we require to look through the elements of bread and wine to the broken body and shed blood of Christ.

There are four things strikingly set forth in the ancient worshipper's coming with his sacrifices, and these are the same in the believer's observance of the Lord's supper :

1st. There is implied an acknowledgment of guilt. This was the loud language of the spiritual Israelite, when he came with "the blood of others." This is the same confession of the believer before the symbols of the broken body and shed blood of Christ.

2d. There is an acknowledgment of the *desert* of guilt. In this the devout worshipper under both dispensations speaks alike. In presenting the Lamb or sacrifice to be slain, he emphatically said : "I deserve to die ; I have sinned ; the wages of sin is death." And as he saw the blood of the innocent victim shed, could he fail to realize what he deserved ? and when its flesh was taken and put on the altar, and the fire was consuming the sacrifice, was it not an awful exhibition of what he deserved, and what the infinitely holy God would be to him, were he to come before him in his own righteousness, viz., "a consuming fire?"—Heb. xii. 29. And such, too, is the acknowledgment before the emblematic representation in the bread and wine.

3d. But more particularly, there is faith in the sacrifice as an atonement for this guilt. "This blood is shed instead of my blood; it is an atonement for my sin; the life is in the blood; it is an atonement for my soul; it is life for life." But the typical sacrifice could not take away sin; it was but typical of that which does take away sin. So the language of the believer, as he partakes of the emblems at the communion feast, is: "This body was broken for me, this blood was shed for the remission of my sins." And he is warranted to say and believe this, because Christ is saying to him: "This is my body broken for you; this is my blood shed for you, for the remission of sins."—Luke xxii. 19.

And, lastly,—There is implied the knowledge of being pardoned and accepted by God, by coming to Him through the "one sacrifice." The true spiritual worshipper of old, when he came with his sacrifice, and presented it, looking to the great anti-type, was warranted to believe that his sins were taken away, that his sins and iniquities God would remember no more.—Heb. x. 17. So it is now: by faith in the same great truth, whether set forth simply as a truth, or seen emblematically through an ordinance, we are warranted to believe that "our sins, which are many, are forgiven;" that we are pardoned for Christ's sake; that we enjoy the blessedness of those whose sins are covered, and to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity.—Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

It is thus, then, that all believers, in all ages, under all dispensations, are justified and accepted by God, in the same way, by believing in the same Saviour, and rejoicing in the same essential truth. This great truth is the ground or basis of union among all believers. Whatever may be the varying development of Divine truth, whatever the varying rites and ordinances which

God may see, and has seen, fit to appoint in His church, whatever the varying conditions of mankind, there is but one great work sufficient for man, one great truth, essentially by faith of which all are justified and saved ; and thus God's procedure in grace has been, still is, and will continue to be, He that believeth shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.—Mark xvi. 16. It was thus that by *faith* Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts. Abel offered of the firstlings of his flock, in which was recognised the great doctrine of the atonement ;—Cain brought only of the fruit of the ground.—Gen. iv. 3, 4. And thus it follows, that from the first believer “who saw Christ's day afar off, and was glad,” down to the latest posterity, the Gospel is the same, essentially the same ; all are one in Christ Jesus.—Gal. iii. 28. And even when we shall no longer “see through a glass darkly, but face to face ;” when faith shall give place to sight, and hope to fruition ; when the believer is translated from grace to glory, he will not require to turn his attention and affections in a new direction ; he will behold the same Saviour that he beholds now ; he will rest on the same work that he rests on now ; he will rejoice in the same truth that he rejoices in now. When John, in apocalyptic vision, saw heaven opened, he saw the throne of God : And I beheld, and lo ! in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a *Lamb as it had been slain*.—Rev. v. 6. He listened, too, to the ascriptions of praise ; and though he beheld there a multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, who were standing before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes ; though they were there

from every age, and from every nation, yet there was one harmonious chorus of praise, and the object and the subject were the same: "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." And angels, too, united in the new song: Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.—Rev. v. 9-13.

Dear reader, do you not see that "there is no other name given under heaven or among men, whereby we must be saved," but the name of Christ? Do you not see there is only one door, one way to the Father, and "no man cometh to the Father but by Christ?" Does not all Divine truth concentrate in this point? Do not God's institutions point in the same direction, whether under the new or the old dispensations? Do you not recognize the one great principle of God's procedure in grace, to receive sinners only through Christ, and to justify those only who believe, and who believe substantially and essentially the same great truth—Gospel truth. Fellow-sinner, flee from every other refuge, as a refuge of lies.—Isa. xxviii. 17. Be assured that *sincerity* will not save you, unless you know the truth. Many think that sincerity will do. Paul was sincere when he was a persecutor, but his sincerity did not compensate for want of truth.

Acts of generosity will not save you. You may give all your goods to feed the poor, see 1 Cor. xiii. 3. *Morality* will not save you. There is a morality where

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love to Christ is not the principle, where the work of Christ is not the basis. It will not do. Paul was blameless before his conversion.—Phil. iii. 6.

Observance of ordinances in themselves will not save you. There must be the apprehension of the great essential truth. You may go to Church, prayer-meeting, the communion, but if you are looking and trusting to any thing else but the great work of Jesus, you are wrong. Paul was a Pharisee—a great stickler for religious forms and observances, but he knew not the truth till he believed in Christ. O, there is a danger at the present time of trusting in forms, in rites, in observances.

Performances of religious duties will not save you. Phil. iii. 5., Gal. vi. 15. *Zeal for religion* will not save you. Paul tells us, before his conversion, "as concerning zeal he persecuted the Church;" and, in writing to the Romans, he says of the Israelites, who were still unbelieving: "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge"—Rom. x. 2. Nothing, nothing, O, sinner, but the great doctrine of the Cross, the great truth as it is in Jesus, will set you free from the bondage of Satan, and introduce you into "the glorious liberty of the children of God." O, how true it is, then, "one thing is needful;" have you chosen the good part that shall not be taken from you—Luke x. 42. "If our Gospel is hid to you, you are lost." But observe farther,

THE GOSPEL-WAY, A NEW WAY TO HEAVEN.

The usual procedure of God in the relationship sustained by moral beings to Himself, as the Great Governor, is this:—Those who enjoy eternal felicity, do so by continued perfect personal obedience to his immutable law; and those who by sin have been cast out of

Heaven, remain *out*. An impassable gulf lies between them and glory—Luke xvi. 26. Their sins are mountains of inaccessible height between them and God—Isa. lix. 2. The walls of Heaven are to them a “wall of fire round about.” This is the usual way. This is his procedure, so far as the great principle of his Law is concerned. But the Gospel reveals a *new plan*. It tells of a “ladder” to glory—Gen. xxviii. 12. It tells of a “door that has been opened into Heaven,” that was never opened before; of a “new way” that has been cut through these adamantine walls, and these mountains of iniquity, at the inconceivable expense of the toil and suffering, the ignominy and agony of no less a personage than the only begotten Son of God.” No other was competent to the task. But he was “mighty to save.” He travelled in the greatness of his strength.—Isa. lxiii. 1. “He was the Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Prince of Peace.” In leading many sons to glory, he was made “perfect through suffering.”—Heb. ii. 10.

This new door into the enjoyment of everlasting felicity, has been opened for mankind-sinners, and for them alone. Sinners get in by this new way “by faith without the deeds of the law.”—Rom. iii. 28. It is not by what they *do*, but by what they *believe*. This is an entirely new plan of justification: of receiving sinners, and treating them as if they had never sinned. It is a plan never heard of before—never thought of before, but it as assuredly leads to the blessing, as perfect obedience does. It is a sure, open, and safe way, as well as a new way.

But does any say: “Why, this new way acts under the old way; the Gospel makes void the law”—Rom. iii. 31. No, by no means. The law of God was never

so honoured as it is by this new way. In order to open up this new way, Christ came under the law, he obeyed the law—Gal. iv. 4. Prophecy represents him as saying: "So I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me; to do thy will, O God, I take delight"—Ps. xl. 7, 8; and thus he reiterated when he said, my meat and my drink is to do the will of my Heavenly Father—John iv. 34; and even in the dark hour of his sufferings, when it pleased the Lord to bruise him, he cried out. "Not my will, but thine be done."—Luke xxii. 42. There never had been such honour thrown on the rectitude and benignity of the Divine law before. It was more honoured by the subjection and obedience of Christ to its requirements, than it would have been by the perfect personal obedience of those for whom he died, and for whom this new door has been opened. Yea, it was more honoured by Christ's obedience than it has ever been by the obedience of angels and arch-angels during the whole period of unvarying rectitude since their creation. O, no, no, the Gospel does not set aside the law, it honours and magnifies the law—Isa. xlii. 21: it establishes the law.—Rom. iii. 31.

The penal sanction of the law was highly honoured by the sufferings of Christ, as its requirements were by his obedience. He suffered for sin, he died for our sins. The awful, but righteous penalty of the law was never exhibited with more force. The rectitude, the necessity, the justice of the penalty, were never seen so impressively and powerfully as in Christ's sufferings and death. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him and put him to grief, he was making his soul an offering for sin."—Isa. liii. 10. The penal sanction of God's law is seen more forcibly in what Christ suffered for sinners, than it would have been seen in the eternal perdition of all for whom he

died, yea, than in the present sufferings of fallen angels who are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.—Jude 7. Do you not see, then, that this new way to glory does not lower God's law, it relaxes neither its principles, its precepts, nor its penal sanction. Nay, "it magnifies the law and makes it honourable."—Isa. xlii. 21. It does not unsettle the principles of the Divine government; no, it consolidates these principles, "it establishes the law," and thus it is that "God is just, while he justifies the believer in Christ;" "justice and judgment are still the habitation of his throne, even while *mercy and truth* now go before his face."—Ps. lxxxix. 14. O! this new way is a safe way, it is safe for God's government, as well as for man's eternal interests.

The sinner, in getting through this door that has been opened, has to acknowledge that he is a sinner, that God's law is holy, just, and good; that he deserves to die, to be for ever shut out from Heaven; and therefore, with such an acknowledgment, he must believe that it is only through what Christ has done and suffered, only through the righteousness of Christ that he is, and can be, and asks to be, accepted by the Holy God. He is justified by faith, and being justified by faith he has peace unto God, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God.—Rom. v. 1, 2.

O, fellow-sinner, think not to get salvation, to enter in by "the door," by thinking that you are not so bad as others, that you have some good qualities, some amiable virtues. No, no, you must come as a poor perishing sinner, as a hell-deserving sinner, as "wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and destitute of all things."—Rev. iii. 17. You must ask pardon for *Christ's sake*, you must ask to be received *in the name of Christ*, and thus coming to God through the atonement of Christ,

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believing in that, trusting to that, you are warranted to believe that your sins, which are many, are forgiven, that, like Christian, in John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the burden of your guilt has fallen from your shoulders, that you may now enjoy the "*liberty* wherewith Christ makes his people free," and, like the Ethiopian Eunuch, you may "go on your way rejoicing."

In what way are you trying, O reader, to get to heaven? You, no doubt, desire to get there. Are you saying that you are trying to do the best you can; you are resolving to do so and so; you have left off such and such sins; you are performing such and such duties. O, be assured, that if you are trying to get there by what you have done, or are doing, or intend to do, you will find a flaming sword at the gate of paradise that turns every way to keep you from the tree of life.—Gen. iii. 24. God, to you, will be a "consuming fire"—Heb. xii. 29. The walls of heaven will be "a wall of fire" to you. O, "turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" Take the "*new way*;" you must "enter by the door;" you must enter into the holiest of all by *the blood* of Jesus; by that *new* and living way which has been consecrated for us through the rent vail of his flesh.—Heb. x. 19, 20. There is no other way, no other door for you, O sinner; but you need no other way. This way is safer, it is accessible, it is free; enter, then, in at the strait gate, "for strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth to everlasting life, and few there be that go in thereat."

THE GOSPEL FARTHER STATED.

The Gospel does not come to tell you what you are to do, but what you are to *believe*. It points you to what *has already been done*, and it tells you that Christ said, when about to give up the ghost, "it is finished."—John

xix. 30. It does not come to tell you what *penance* you are to suffer, but it tells you what *has already been suffered*—that *Christ suffered*, the just for the unjust.—1 Peter iii. 18. It does not come to tell you how you are to reconcile God, but it tells you that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and he beseeches you, *be ye reconciled to God*.—2 Cor. v. 20. Some of old put the question to the Saviour, “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” and Jesus answered and said unto them, “This is the work of God, that *ye believe on him whom he hath sent*.”—John vi. 29. Attend, then, O fellow-sinner, to the great Gospel truth which the Spirit employs as the sword to slay the enmity of your heart and reconcile you to God, that you may renounce your “own righteousness, which is but as filthy rags,” and be clothed with “the best robe,” even the righteousness of Christ; that you may put off the old man, and put on Christ. Christ took *our* nature, Heb. ii. 16, that we might be “partakers of the Divine nature.”—2 Peter i. 4. “*He bore our griefs* and carried *our sorrows*,” Isaiah liii. 4; “that *his joy* might remain in us, and our *joy* might be full.”—John xv. 11. *He* drank the cup of bitterness which we deserved to drink, and O, it was such as made him cry out three times, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;”—Mat. xxvi. 39; that we might drink of the water of life, that flows from the throne of God, clear as crystal.—Rev. xxii. 1. Though the Son of God, he became the Son of Man, that we, the sons of men, might become the sons of God. *He* came under the law, Gal. iv. 4, that we might come under grace.—Rom. vi. 14. He endured the curse, Gal. iii. 13, that we might enjoy the blessing. The multitude on earth cried out “crucify him, crucify him,” Luke xxiii. 21, that multitudes in heaven might rejoice

over a sinner that repenteth.—Luke xv. 7. *He* was condemned before an earthly tribunal, Luke xxiii. 24, that we might be openly acknowledged and acquitted at the bar of God. His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, Mat. xxvi. 38, that believing, we might rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.—1 Peter i. 8. He was crowned with thorns, that we might be crowned with glory. He made himself of no reputation, and took on him the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 7, that we might be made kings and priests unto our God.—Rev. i. 6. He cried out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Mat. xxvii. 46, that we, who deserved to be forsaken and cast off by God, might be brought near to him, and be able to say, “truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.”—1 John i. 3 His heart was pierced by the malice of man, John xix. 34, that ours might be pierced by the love of God. “He suffered without the gate” of the Jerusalem below, Heb. xiii. 12, that we might have “pleasures at God’s right hand” in the Jerusalem above. He tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. 9, that every man might taste and see that God is good.—Ps. xxxiv. 8. He came down *from* heaven, that we might go *to* heaven. He came from the Father, John xvi. 28, that we might go to the Father—xiv 6. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we, through his poverty, might be made rich.—2 Cor. viii. 9. His body was broken for us, 1 Cor. xi. 24, that it might be spiritual bread—living bread, John vi. 51; his blood was shed for us, that it might be spiritual drink, that whoso eateth his flesh and drinketh his blood, may have eternal life, John vi. 54; or, as he explains without figure, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life—verse 47.

O, dear reader, do you not see that you can get salvation only through the blood of the cross ; only by believing on what Christ has done and suffered for you ; that you are unworthy, yea, hell-deserving, but that Christ is worthy, his work is meritorious, his sufferings were vicarious—he died for you ? Do you not see that God's law is magnified and made honourable by the obedience unto death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that now, by faith in that work, in the great propitiation, though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as snow, though red as crimson, they shall be as wool.—Isaiah i. 18. Listen, then, to his voice, “ Look unto me and be ye saved, for I am God, and besides me there is no Saviour.”—Isaiah xlv. 22. Harken unto me ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness, behold I bring near my righteousness unto you, and my salvation shall not tarry.—xlvi. 12. Sinner, there is no absolute necessity that thou shouldest die ; eternal life is in thy offer. He that hath the Son hath life, 1 John v. 12 ; that thou shouldest go to hell, there is a door opened into heaven, and a voice addresses sinners with this important invitation, and it is the voice of Christ himself, “ By me if *any* man enter in, he shall be saved.”—John x. 9. “ Hear and you shall live.”

THE GOSPEL EXEMPLIFIED.

It is not an uncommon thing to talk of Christian experience, of conversion, of a change of heart, &c. O, that such conversation were more general, and that millions more were “ ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason for the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear.” But, in all such details of conversion and change of heart, let it always be applied as the great test, the great touchstone. Are they looking to Christ ? are they looking and trusting to no-

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thing else but what Christ has done for them? Are they drawing their peace and sense of safety directly from Jesus? Is he the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end of their confidence? This is the main, essential element in all true Christian experience; there can be no superstructure where Christ is not the foundation, and the only foundation, and chief corner stone.

If, however, you find them swimming in the fluctuating waters of agitation and uncertainty, shifting with "the ebbings and flowings" of excited "frames and feelings," tossed too and fro with winds of human impulse and passion, seeking for peace amid the instable elements of their own affections, then, however contentedly they may float on these fluctuating frames and feelings, it is evident, that whatever hope they entertain, if it be not an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering *within the veil where Jesus is*, if Christ is not in them the hope of glory, Col. i. 27, then it is a false hope, it is a hope that will make ashamed. Reader, apply this great test to yourself, and to all cases of detailed conversion, and if you see that they draw not their peace and safety directly from the "finished" work of Jesus, but are seeking it from themselves, let their error be made apparent; let it be seen that men may as soon expect salvation from their works as from their feelings; nothing, nothing lies between any sinner and hell, but the great work of Christ; nothing, nothing opens a door in heaven to the sinner, but the work of Christ. It is He that opens and no man can shut; it is he that shuts and no man can open.—Rev. iii. 7.

Hear MARTIN LUTHER—"It is impossible for a man to be a Christian without having Christ; and, if he has Christ, he has all that is in Christ. What gives peace to the conscience is, that, by believing, *our sins are no*

more ours, but Christ's, upon whom God has laid them all ; and that, on the other hand, all Christ's righteousness is ours. Learn to know Christ and him crucified. Learn to despair of yourself, and sing to him such a song as this, ' Lord Jesus thou art my righteousness, but I am thy sin ; thou has taken to thee what's mine, and given me what is thine. '"

Hear JOHN CALVIN—In his last will, written a few days before his death, he says, " I testify also and profess, that I humbly seek from God, that he may so will me to be washed and purified by *the great Redeemer's blood*, shed for the sins of the whole human race, that it may be permitted me to stand before his tribunal *under the covert of the Redeemer himself.*"

Hear JOHN WESLEY—

" I the chief of sinners am,
But Jesus died for me."

JOHN KNOX.—When he lay a-dying, he was much in prayer, ever crying, " Come Lord Jesus, sweet Jesus into thy hands I commend my spirit." Oft-times, after some deep meditation, he would say, " O, serve the Lord in fear, and death shall not be terrible to you. Blessed is the death of those *who have part in the death of Jesus.*"

JOHN LAMBERT, as he was burning in Smithfield, and his legs were quite consumed by the fire, he lifted up his hands, his fingers flaming like torches, but his heart abounding with comfort, crying out, "*None but Christ, none but Christ !*"

Dr. HARRIS, long time ago head of Trinity College in Oxford, when friends visited him in his last sickness, he used to say, " I cannot speak, but I can hear." Being asked where his comfort lay, he answered, "*in Christ*, and in the free grace of God." One telling him that he might take much comfort in his labours, and the

good he had done, his answer was, "*All is nothing without a Saviour*, without him my best works would condemn me." In all the letter-wills which he made, he inserted this legacy, "*Item*, I bequeath to all my children, and to their children's children, to each of them a Bible, with this inscription, '*None but Christ.*'"

The pious HALYBURTON, when dying, commended Christ to all that came to see him. When he was advised to be quiet, he said, "Whereon should a man bestow his last breath, but in commending the Lord Jesus Christ, God clothed in our nature, *dying for our sins.*"

DAVID DICKSON, once professor of Divinity in Glasgow and also in Edinburgh, when on his deathbed, was asked how he found himself, replied, "I have taken all my good deeds and all my bad deeds, and I have thrown them together in a heap, and *fled from them both* to Christ, and *in him* I have peace."

When Mr. McLAREN, of the Tolbooth Church of Edinburgh was dying, his colleague visited him, and asked him, "What are you doing, brother?" His answer was, "I'll tell you what I am doing, brother; I am gathering together all my prayers, all my sermons, all my good deeds, and all my ill deeds, and I am going to throw *them all* overboard, and swim to glory on the plank of free grace."

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.—This great and good man, when near his death, kept saying to some ministers, "Dear brethren, do all for Christ, pray for Christ, preach for Christ, feed the flock for Christ, visit and catechize for Christ, do all for Christ." When some spoke to him of his former painfulness and faithfulness in the work of God, he said, "I disclaim *all that*; the porch I would be in at is *redemption and forgiveness of sins through Christ's blood.*"

Dr. GONGE.—This eminent and holy minister, when any of his friends would have comforted him on his deathbed, with telling him of his eminent gifts and service in the ministry, would answer, “I dare not think of any such thing for comfort; *only Jesus Christ, and what he hath done and endured, is the ground of my sure comfort.*”

Mr. HOOKER, a minister in New England, when one that stood weeping at his bedside, as he lay a-dying, said to him, “Sir, you are going to receive the reward of all your labours;” he replied, “Brother, I am going to *receive mercy.*”

JOHN ELIOT, the first missionary among the Indians in New England.—His biographer thus writes of his deathbed: “He was so full of peace, of hope, of a calm and full trust in God, that nothing could shake; but his humility, like a guardian angel, ever hovered round his heart and kept it in safety. ‘What was the word I spoke last,’ said the dying man after a pause; ‘I recall that word; I spoke of *what I had done.* O, child of the dust, lie low, *it is CHRIST that hath triumphed.*’”

Hear the great GEORGE WHITEFIELD in one of his addresses.—“I know, by sad experience, what it is to be lulled asleep with a false peace; long was I lulled asleep, long did I think myself a Christian, when I knew nothing of the Lord Jesus Christ. I went, perhaps, farther than many of you do; I used to fast twice a week, I used to pray sometimes nine times a day, I used to receive the sacrament constantly every Lord’s day, and yet I knew *nothing of Jesus Christ* in my heart. The most of you may have peace, but, for Christ’s sake, examine upon what this peace is founded: see if Christ be brought home to your souls, if you have had a feeling application of *the merits of Jesus Christ*

brought home to your souls, so that you could say, 'Now I know that God is my friend, that Jesus is my Saviour;' now I call him 'my Lord and my God;' now I know that Christ hath not only died for others, but I know that *Jesus has died for me* in particular."

Mrs. JUDSON, the eminent missionary to Burmah, thus writes in reference to her conversion:—"I felt myself to be a poor, lost sinner, destitute of everything to recommend me to the Divine favour. This view of myself humbled me in the dust, melted me into sorrow and contrition for my sins, induced me to lay my soul at the feet of Christ, and plead his *merits alone* as the ground of my acceptance. I felt that if Christ had not died to make atonement for sin, I could not ask God to dishonour his holy government so far as to save so polluted a creature; and that, should he even now condemn me to suffer eternal punishment, it would be so just that my mouth would be stopped, and all holy beings in the universe would acquiesce in the sentence and praise him as a just and righteous God." Again, she writes, "May I ever flee to the *bleeding Saviour as my only refuge*, and, renouncing my own righteousness, may I rely entirely on the righteousness of thy dear Son."

In the account of JAMES LAING, a boy in Dundee, whose conversion and death are narrated by the Rev. R. M'Cheyne, we have the following:—"Towards night he came to the other end of the cottage, and put this question, 'Have I only to believe that Jesus died for sinners? Is that all?' He was told 'Yes.' 'Well! I believe that *Jesus died for me*, for I am a poor, hell-deserving sinner. I have been praying all this afternoon that when Jesus shed his blood for sinners, he would sprinkle some of it upon me, and *he did it*.' He then turned up Rom. v. 8, and read, 'While we were yet

sinner, Christ died for us.' His sister wept for joy, and James added, 'I am not afraid to die now, *for Jesus has died for me.*'"

Hear the striking statement of WILLIAM MILLS, a criminal who was executed at Edinburgh in 1785, in giving an account of his conversion when in prison. "Gentlemen," said he, pointing to his bed, "I have been tossed there all night, and shed tears and prayed, and never could get near to God; all was darkness, and, had I continued in this way, it would have ended in despair, and the loss of my reason. But it pleased God that a gentleman came to me, and, when I told him what I had been doing, and the distress I was in, he told me I could not get relief in that way, for *Christ had finished on the cross that work* which was only able to save me; that God sent his Son to die for sinners, that whosoever believed this would be saved; and that I would find peace with God, and only could find it, in believing this. He marked out some passages of the Scriptures, and desired me to attend to what the Word of God declared, and reject everything contrary to it. And now, I have considered these things, and find them just as he described. I see that 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish,' &c.; and, since I believed this, I am changed; I am happy now, I can get near to God now; I can pray to him with pleasure; my heart now is light, for I feel that weight, which I thought would have sunk me for ever, taken away; everything is new to me; I pass the night easy, and, indeed, I cannot describe the change I feel."

Hear some of the heathen converts:—

VARA, was an idolater in the South Sea Islands. His function was to provide human sacrifices. After his

conversion, when on his deathbed, the missionary asked him, "Are you sorry that you cast away your lying gods?" With tears of pleasure he exclaimed, "Oh! no, no. What! can I be sorry for casting away death for life? *Jesus is my rock*, the fortification in which my soul takes shelter." He was again asked, "On what do you found your hopes of future blessedness?" He replied, "*The blood of Jesus is my foundation.*"

ME, was a great heathen warrior, but among the first converts in Raiatea. When his days were numbered, Mr. Williams asked what were his views of himself in the sight of God, and what his hope rested upon? Mark his reply—"I have been in great trouble this morning; but I am happy now. I saw an immense mountain with precipitous sides, up which I endeavoured to climb; but when I had attained a considerable height, I lost my hold and fell to the bottom. Exhausted with perplexity and fatigue, I went to a distance and sat down to weep, and, while weeping, I saw *a drop of blood* fall upon that mountain, and in a moment it was dissolved. That mountain was my sins, and the drop which fell on it was *one drop of the precious blood of Jesus*, by which the mountain of my guilt must be melted away."

Of MAHENDRA, a convert in Calcutta, Dr. Duff thus writes—"Never can I forget the peculiar tone and emphasis with which he repeatedly exclaimed, 'I am not afraid to die—oh! no; I know in whom I have believed. I am ready to die—to die without any regret, *resting on my Saviour.*'"

Mr. Wingate, a missionary among the Jews at Pesth, writes thus of a converted Jewess—"During her sickness, while she was meditating on the state of her soul, Mr. W. asked her, 'Where will you go now, in the

event of your death—to hell or to Christ in glory ? ‘ I believe,’ she replied, ‘ on Christ, and that *he has poured out his blood, even for me.*’ ”

The experience of another Jewess the same missionary briefly details.—“ After reading and prayer,” says she, “ I began to feel uneasy in my soul ; my sins alarmed me, and sometimes I could get no sleep from fear of eternal damnation. I cried earnestly to the Lord for deliverance. The Lord showed me *the love of Jesus in laying down his life for poor miserable sinners like me.* I am now enabled to rest on his all-sufficient righteousness and strength. Since this has taken place, I am full of joy and hope, and read the Bible with daily thirst and delight. The meaning of the Scriptures is opened up to me with great light and clearness.”

Hear the confession of TUPE, of the island of Rarotonga—“ I have no dread of death. *Christ is my refuge.*” Then, in a little time he added, “ Salvation is all of grace, *through the blood of Christ.*” Again the missionary went to see him: “ How is it with your soul ? ” “ All is well.” “ Do you find your Saviour your support in death ? ” “ He is.” “ Is the pathway clear ? ” “ No obstruction ; the way is clear.” “ Have you any fear ? ” “ None ; *Christ is mine.*”

Hear the *Christian* NEGRO. To the question, what do you believe about Jesus Christ and your own soul ? he replied, “ Me believe, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners ; and though me be chief of sinners, yet Jesus will save me, though me be only poor black Negro. O yes, sir, me believe that Jesus die for poor Negro. What would become of poor wicked Negro, if Christ no die for him. But he die for the chief of sinners, and dat makes my heart quite glad.”

Hear, in conclusion, the simple experience of one

who, though deficient in intellect, yet knew the truth. When "poor Joseph" heard the glad tidings, "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief," he was led to reason—Christ came to save *sinners*, therefore *poor Joseph*.

O, dear reader, do you see that he came to save you? Do you see that there is but *one* "way"—*one* "door"—*one* "name;" and that all who are saved, are saved by believing in the same essential truth, and resting on the same great work. Believe, then, and live; rest on the same great work; and "neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers," • • "shall separate you from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. viii. 38, 39.

SECTION II.

HOW THE GOSPEL IS OFTEN HID.

This is a most important department of our subject. How many thousands are there in professedly Christian countries to whom the simple Gospel of Christ is yet a hidden Gospel. How many are at this present moment wandering in the mists of spiritual ignorance, and in the intricacies of religious error. How many are now seeking for light, struggling to be free, wading in the dark waters, seeking some rock on which their feet may rest. Here, for example, is an individual who has been toiling for years to get salvation; to get as much peace to an uneasy conscience as enable him to die with a comfortable hope. At last, he comes to the knowledge of the truth, and "rejoices in hope of the glory of God." But observe: How, after all, does he reach this condition of peaceful assurance? Was it necessary that he must grope, and toil, and struggle for a considerable period, as if this were the necessary "dark valley" through which he must pass? Must he make a pilgrimage of toil and penance to reach the "great rock in the weary land?" O no, no. The work of Christ, on which he is led ultimately to rest, and rest alone, as a ground of pardon and acceptance, was a work on which he might have rested years before, had he known the truth. "The truth as it is in Jesus," was as true when he was ignorant—as true when he was in the maze of error, as it is when he was led to rest on it. O, is it not a sad sight to contemplate, that there are many souls now

hovering about on the troubled waters of religious error, seeking, like the dove, a resting place, where none is to be found. O that they could be led to see that there is no resting place for the soul but the *ark*—but Jesus Christ, who is “the covert from the storm, and the refuge from the tempest.” O, it is a pity that so many should be groping, and struggling, and thinking that Christ’s salvation was something afar off, when, in reality, “the word is nigh them, in their very mouth;” and that instead of their hearts being so long full of doubt, they were not full of love; instead of sighs and groans, they were not singing the new song, even praise to our God (Ps. xl. 3.); instead of expending their strength on a useless labour, they were not living to *Him who died for them* and rose again. It is in order to guide the feet of sinners into “the way of peace,” and to remove some of those mists and obstructions that are apt to lie in the path of inquirers after truth, that the present little treatise has been written. O that the Lord would bless what has already been written in the exhibition of the simple Gospel; and O that the Lord may make whatever of what follows that is agreeable to his will, a means of removing those countless obstacles that keep sinners from seeing “the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ!”

From the manner in which the verse which we have selected as the foundation of our subject is connected with the preceding and succeeding context, it will appear that the causes whereby the Gospel is a hidden Gospel, may result from two great sources. There may be causes existing in those who make known the word of God, and causes in those to whom it is made known, whereby the Gospel is a hidden Gospel, and souls are lost. Now the professing church is the great human agency

for making known the Gospel; and, therefore, we would classify the causes thus—

I. *Causes existing in the professing Church, whereby the Gospel is hid, and souls are lost.*

II. *Causes existing in the sinner, whereby the Gospel is a hidden Gospel.*

We readily admit that the Apostle here states that the general reason why the Gospel was hid to those to whom he preached and wrote, was, because the god of this world had blinded the minds of them that believe not, &c. But the preceding context plainly implies that causes had existed, were existing, and would exist, in those who professed to make known the word of God, whereby the Gospel would be hidden, and souls would be lost. We come, then, to consider, in the first place,

SOME CAUSES EXISTING IN THE PROFESSING CHURCH
WHEREBY THE GOSPEL IS HID.

The Apostle states, in his own and Timothy's name, in the verse preceding, "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." This language plainly implies, that were he and Timothy, in making known the word of God, to employ dishonesty or craftiness; were they to handle the word of God deceitfully, they would be guilty of causing a hidden Gospel, and the blood of souls would be required at their hand. But as they did not do so, their blood was upon their own head. He tells us, moreover, in ii. 17, "We are not as many, who corrupt the word of God." Now,

this plainly shows us that a great responsibility rests on the Church in this matter ; and if the Gospel is hid, there may be causes in the Church as well as in the world, why it is hid, and souls are lost.

That a great responsibility rests on the Church as to this, and more particularly on ministers in the Church, is plainly implied here, and a great number of other passages might be cited in corroboration of this. Let us cite a few :

Ezek. iii. 17, " Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel, therefore hear the word at my mouth ; and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die ; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life ; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at thy hand." Also to the same purport, xxxiii. 7, 8.

Ezek. xxxiv. 2, " Wo to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves. Should not the shepherds feed the flocks," &c. See verses 3—10.

Isaiah ix. 16, " For the leaders of this people cause them to err ; and they that are led of them are destroyed : " lvi. 10, " His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant ; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark, sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber ; yea, they are greedy dogs, which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand, they all look to their own way, every one for his gain from his quarter."

Jer. xxiii. 11, " Both prophet and priest are profane ; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the Lord." See also verses 14—22, " But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from

their evil way, and from the evil of their doings." See also Hosea iv. 1—13, Malachi ii. 7—9.

Acts xx. 26—30, "Wherefore I take you to record that I am pure from the blood of all men; for I have not shunned to declare unto you *all the counsel of God*." It was in this way he was pure of their blood. "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of *your own selves* shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Gal. i. 7, "There be some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ."

2 Peter ii. 1—3, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon them swift destruction; and many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." See also Mat. xv. 9 and 14; xxiii. 13, 16, 23, 24; Eph. iv. 14; 1 Tim. i. 7; 2 Tim. ii. 16—18; Titus i. 11, 14.

Having thus shown from the Scriptures that a great responsibility rests on the professing Church as to the dissemination of the word of God in its simplicity and purity, we are now prepared to advert to some causes whereby the Church has been guilty of obscuring or hiding the Gospel.

O, this is a most fruitful field of investigation—prolific in weeds of the rankest growth, and the most unsightly appearance. The corruptions, abominations, superstitions, and selfish spirit of the professedly Christian Church for many hundred years, form one of the darkest and most melancholy pages in the world's history. Alas! how often "has the gold—the Gospel

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But it would be beside our purpose to look back on the past; it will be more for our advantage to contemplate the present. And even with this restriction of view, it would probably be of little use to dwell on that great system—that Hierarchism—that has existed, and still exists, and spreads a wide and benighting influence over the souls of millions of our fellow-beings. Who that knows the Gospel, the simple Gospel of the grace of God, does not feel his heart stirred within him, when he looks back on the past, and looks around on the present; when he beholds how sadly and awfully the truth of God has been corrupted, “making the commandment of God of none effect by the traditions of men, and teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

—Mat. xv. 6, 9. Christ is indeed acknowledged; his obedience and death are confessed; but he is almost hid among the numbers that throng, and surround, and perplex the attention of the worshipper. The Virgin Mary receives almost as much attention as the Saviour, and perhaps more—a most singular incongruity with the whole tenor of revealed truth. John the Baptist, Michael the Archangel, Gabriel, Angels, the Apostles, and a host of canonized Saints, all are to act as mediators, as intercessors, while the great work and office of the *one* Mediator between God and man are but partially regarded. Amid a vast multiplicity of images—pretended relics, rites, and ceremonies—penances, good works—works of supererogation—indulgences, and all the externals of a punctilious and ceremonial worship, it is almost as improbable that the eye of *faith* will discover the simple “truth as it is in Jesus,” as it is impossible for the eye of *sense*, to discover the real presence of Christ in the wafer after it has been blessed by

the priest. He that truly apprehends the Gospel in its simple, sublime, and powerful import, cannot but regard the relics, images, crosses, penances, and fasts, as so much rubbish under which the Gospel is buried, and is a hidden Gospel. Like the person that admires the architecture of a monument more than the hero or event which it commemorates; so in Popery, man's work—the commandments and traditions of men—those things of human device, are more regarded than the plain but powerful *doctrine* of "the Cross." O! how many souls have been deprived of the rays of the Sun of Righteousness by that priestly system, that interposes not only between man and God, but between man and the only Saviour—the *one* Mediator—the Great High Priest, who is now passed into the heavens, even Jesus who maketh intercession for us.—Heb. iv. 14.

It is a blessed truth, dear reader, for which we ought to bless God, that we are not dependent for God's truth on the fluctuating opinions of man; that the glorious "Truth that sets free," as originally given by the Holy Ghost through the Apostles and Prophets, comes down to us, not through the changing, distorting, and adulterating medium of tradition; but that the word of God is a *written* word; that it stands at this day, as it did when first delivered; that it "is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." Instead, therefore, of requiring to look to the last Council or conclave of ecclesiastics, we can go back to the very fountain-head of truth, to the words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, 1 Cor. ii. 13; that we can receive "doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness," 2 Tim. iii. 16, fresh from the lips of Christ and the afflatus of the Spirit; that we can learn the law at God's mouth.—Mal. ii. 7. Let us prize the Holy Scriptures which are able to make us wise

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unto salvation.—2 Tim. iii. 15. “To the law therefore and to the testimony, if they speak not according unto them, it is because there is no truth in them.”—Isaiah viii. 20.

It is quite possible, however, that we may be convinced of the errors, superstitions, and idolatries of that system to which reference has been made, and yet we may be destitute of a saving acquaintance with Christ. There is every reason to believe that there are thousands and tens of thousands who, under a professed Protestantism and an adherence to a sect, under that wide term, are yet without Christ, without God, and without hope in the world.—Eph. ii. 12. A hidden Gospel is still fearfully prevalent even among Protestants, throughout all the branches of that great system. There is reason to fear that to many, many who make a profession of religion, the Gospel is still hid. Let us be charitable, but let us be faithful: there is a spurious charity which may only impart the warmth of love to that which may “bite like a serpent and sting like an adder.”

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPREHENDING THE ELEMENTARY TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL.

Whatever obscures the great elementary truth of the Gospel, throws a cloud on the whole scheme of grace. There is one great personage which the Bible sets forth to view, it is Christ; one great work, it is his “obedience unto death;” one great duty, it is faith in the work of Christ. This is the great central part. All Gospel truth centres in Christ. As all rivers run into the sea, so do all doctrines, precepts, promises, types, and ordinances, run into Christ. Each may not run by a direct course, but it will be found to be a tributary to

some other that flows thither. There is no doctrine, precept, or promise, however distant it may seem from the cross of Christ, but derives its vitality from its connexion with him, just as the most distant leaf that quivers on the most distant bough derives its nourishment through the root as well as the nearest. Christ is the great object to which the sinner's attention is *first* to be directed: "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He is the great object to whom he is to keep looking during his whole life; he is to live by faith of the Son of God—"to him to live is Christ"—as he runs the race that is set before him, he is to keep "looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith." He is the great object to whom he looks last in the hour of death: "I will not fear," says he, "for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me."—Ps. xxiii. Or, as the dying Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He falls asleep in Jesus; and, when the believer passes from grace to glory, he finds his attention and ascriptions of praise directed still "to the Lamb that was slain." He is the great object whom ministers are to preach; they are to know nothing but Christ and him crucified.—1 Cor. ii. 2. "Behold the Lamb of God." God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Gal. vi. 14.

As all Gospel truth centres in Christ, and all Gospel hopes flow from him, it is therefore necessary that in all evangelical doctrine "the Cross of Christ" must occupy the foreground. There must be no truths, doctrines, duties, or promises standing between the eye of faith and the crucified Saviour. No doctrine must assume the same position or prominence as the great doctrine of the Cross; and no doctrine or truth, when proclaimed, ought to be seen in any other way than in consistent connexion

and harmony with the Gospel. Anything that would interpose between the view and Christ, so as to hide or eclipse Him, will hide the Gospel; or anything that would draw the attention of the sinner away from Christ to other truths, unless these are seen in the same field of vision, and in relationship to Christ, will tend to hide the Gospel. Christ must be seen in the centre of the spiritual system, as the sun is in the solar system. It is His *power* that attracts all—His *light* that illumines all—His *love* that warms and vivifies all. And while in the material system, planet is so arranged with planet, that while all are connected with the sun, yet they do not come in the way of one another, so as to intercept its light and heat; so in the spiritual system, while all truths circle round “Christ crucified,” yet there is no truth that, properly contemplated, comes in the way of another, so as to intercept the light and love of the blessed Sun of Righteousness from the believing soul.

It is of vast importance, dear reader, that you have a perception of the great fundamental truth of the Gospel—that you have so learned Christ as to see the foundation on which to build—the rock on which to rest, that your goings may be established, and the new song put into your mouth.—Ps. xl. 2. Unless this is clearly apprehended, there will be a greater or less obscurity resting on the whole scheme of grace, and even the whole system of revealed truth. But when this is perceived, it throws the whole into arrangement and beauty. There was a time when it was supposed that the sun and stars revolved round the earth. The theory was productive of obscurity and perplexity; there were many things which, on this assumption, were unaccountable and contradictory. But when the simple elementary

principle in the arrangement of the solar system was perceived, namely, that the sun was in the centre, the discovery threw light on the whole economy of nature. So also in reference to the great law of gravitation, which is of comparatively recent discovery. The perception of this great principle did much to bring order out of confusion, and threw an extended light over the arrangement of the whole universe of matter. So it is in grace; if the simple elementary "truth as it is in Jesus," the great truth of what Christ did in dying for us, is not clearly apprehended, there will be in the mind of the inquirer obscurity, perplexity, and uncertainty. There may be the observance of facts, and truths, and combinations of truths; but these will not be seen in their relative position and importance; and in all systems there must not merely be the apprehension of separate truths, but the perception of them in their proper adjustment and proportions. As in a building there must be a proper disposition of material to give stability and symmetry—as in a painting there must be a proper arrangement according to perspective; so it is in grace, there are arrangement, stability, and beauty of the highest order. The more accurate our views, the more clearly will the Gospel be seen to be the manifold wisdom of God.—Eph. iii. 10. And, on the other hand, ignorance, or false and perverted notions of it, or confounding something else instead of it, or mixing something else with it, will throw a cloud over all, and other doctrines will be confused, conflicting, or contradictory.

A hidden Gospel imparts darkness to the whole system of grace; a revealed Gospel gives light and life, beauty and stability to the whole. When Christ is hidden, the sun is eclipsed, the soul is darkened, for we cannot have the knowledge of the glory of God but in the face of Jesus

Christ.—2 Cor. iv. 6. It is only when the sinner, as a condemned criminal in himself, is led to see the propitiatory nature of Christ's obedience unto death as a perfect satisfaction to God's law and government for him, that, resting on this "finished" work, he feels that he is safe—that so long as he cleaves to Christ, as the Rock, he is safe, he is under the covert of atoning blood, he touches the sceptre of God's Majesty, and presents his petition and lives. It is then, freed from the bewildering sensation of alarm at his guilt, and exposure to everlasting destruction, having fled to Christ, he has rest; he feels, in taking the Lord as his shepherd, the first thing he can say is, "he maketh me to lie down."—Ps. xxiii. 2. He takes Christ's "yoke which is easy;" "the love of Christ constrains him to live not to himself, but to Him who died for him." "He rejoices in Christ Jesus, and puts no confidence in the flesh."

O, fellow-sinner, if you have fled to the refuge—if you know in whom you have believed—if you are really resting entirely on the work of Christ, then you are safe, your heart will bound with gratitude and joy, your soul will be lit with the light of truth, and your heart warmed with the love of God. Are you so, O reader, or are you not? Are you still groping in darkness, not knowing whither you are going? O, be assured, that these clouds and mists that come between your soul and Christ are not put there by God, or God's word; they arise either from your own carnal, deceitful, and desperately wicked heart, or they are the mists and clouds of religious prejudice and error. Be assured that the great Sun of Righteousness shines constantly with unclouded glory, and the clouds and fogs that obscure His face, and hide his rays, are not *his*, but *ours*.

It is, indeed, a most lamentable fact, that while "the

god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not," the church, which is professedly called by Christ's name, and professes to reflect His glory, should so often, in various ways, have done much to hide the simple Gospel from the view of perishing souls. The Gospel has often been hid by the doctrines of the church, by the discipline of the church, by the ignorance of the church, by the indolence of the church, by the inconsistencies of the church, by the worldliness of the church, by the bigotry of the church, and by the divisions and controversies of the church.

We cannot overtake such a wide and barren field as this presents to our view, either by reviewing the past, or contemplating the present; but we wish to point your attention, O sinner, to some of the causes in the church's teaching, whereby the Gospel is often hid, and perhaps is at present hid from you. We begin with

THE DOCTRINES OF THE PROFESSING CHURCH.

It is a lamentable fact that the church, which should be the great instrumentality for extending the Gospel of Christ, should often, by the intervention of truths between the soul and Christ, or the perversion of them, have placed obstructions before Him who is "the door," so that "those that were entering in, it hindered." On the necessity of the pure and simple Gospel's being taught, and constantly held forth, perhaps the following analogy will serve as an introductory illustration:—When a farmer takes seed and sows it in his field, if there should prove to be no harvest, or a scanty one, or if there should spring up a large quantity of tares with the wheat, he will be desirous to know the cause, or combination of causes, for this result. The failure may arise from the particular nature of the soil, being

too hard or too rocky, or from want of cultivation, or being very imperfectly cleared. But there are other causes to which the failure may be attributed: the seed sown may have been bad seed—seed with the element of life either very feeble, or entirely wanting; the seed also may have had an admixture of tares when it was sown. So it is in the great field of the Gospel; our blessed Redeemer presents a most striking parable on this subject, and tells us that when the “good seed,” the “word of the kingdom,” is sown, if it fails to bring forth fruit, it is by reason of the inattention, hardness of heart, deceitfulness, and worldliness of those to whom it is preached; or, in other words, “the god of this world blinds the minds of them that believe not.” But it is plainly implied in our Saviour’s parable, as it is in the Apostle’s statement, that the unproductiveness—the admixture of tares—may result from the badness or imperfection of the seed, not being the pure word of God, the word which is spirit and life, John vi. 63, and being also mixed with religious errors and sectarian prejudices. The farmer knows the importance of sowing good seed; so does the true, spiritual husbandman. The priest’s lips must keep knowledge, he must learn the law at God’s mouth, he must not be as many that corrupt the word of God, he must, by manifestation of *the truth*, commend himself to every man’s conscience, in the sight of God.—2 Cor. iv. 2. And thus, if the word should be unproductive, the fault will lie with those that hear; and if errors should spring up and abound, to the inquiry, “Sir, didst not thou sow *good seed* in thy field? from whence, then, hath it tares?” he will be able to reply, “An *enemy* hath done this.” Mat. xiii. 27, 28.

In directing attention to the doctrines of the church, let it be carefully noted, that our object is not to analyse *creeds* or *confessions*, not to speak exclusively of any portion of the professing church, but simply to take notice of false religious views and impressions which prevail in the religious world, and which have mostly had their origin there, by which its atmosphere, which should be pure and serene, is rendered dark and hazy by floating mists and lowering clouds, so that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ is greatly obscured, so that our Gospel comes often only "in word, and not in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."—1 Thes. i. 5. It is rather, then, with vague and false opinions that exist in the mind, as known to us by attentive observation and experience, that we have to do, than with doctrines or dogmas in works of theology, or in human testimonies. In this way, we deal with erroneous notions, not in the abstract, but with them in their operative influence, as false *impressions*. And here let us disentangle ourselves from mere human authority; let us commit ourselves to God, and the *word of His grace*, which is able to build us up.—Acts xx. 32. And while we may listen with deference, when we are told, "thus saith Martin Luther," "thus saith John Calvin," "thus saith John Wesley," yet let us remember that "thus saith the Lord" is the only infallible authority. "To the law then, and to the testimony." He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.—Rev. ii. 7.

The first doctrine to which we invite attention, is the great Scripture doctrine of

ELECTION.

We have great reason to fear, that the way in which

this doctrine is sometimes taught and understood, very seriously hides the love of God in Christ Jesus. It is to many a very dark doctrine, and not only dark, but interposes a dark cloud between Christ and the soul. It is not improbable, dear reader, but you may have found it "even darkness which might be felt."—Ex. x. 21. And here, let it be observed, that it is not the doctrine itself that hides the Gospel—no, it is a blessed and gracious doctrine, full of comfort; but it is the vague and loose way in which it is sometimes held, that makes it either partially or completely intercept "the glory of God in the face of Jesus." The doctrine in question is sometimes represented as denoting that God has, from all eternity, under a decree of election, chosen a certain number of the human family, and that under a decree of reprobation, He has doomed all others to everlasting destruction; and that this difference between the two conditions of mankind is entirely attributable to the decree, and that God reveals to us no principle of procedure by which He is guided in this matter, that He chose the one and rejected the other, without letting us know any principle or rule of action; that the redeemed in heaven, and the lost in hell, are, and will be there, just because God, irrespective of any *known* principle of procedure, decreed the one to everlasting felicity, and by a similar decree devoted the other to irremediable woe; that their doom was thus unchangeably fixed from all eternity, even before they were born—before they sinned, and before they heard the word of God. Let who will believe such a doctrine as here stated, I, for one, cannot, for I see no such exhibition of truth in the word of God. I can see how it is fitted to agitate the sinner, and fill him with distress and dismay. I can see how it rises

up as an exceeding high mountain between the soul and Christ ; but I cannot see it in harmony of relationship with the simplicity and freeness of the Gospel. It is fitted to introduce a complete fatalism ; and O, how many souls has this doctrine not darkened ? How many inquirers after truth has it not stopped in the middle of their search ? Instead of their minds being directed to the "truth as it is in Jesus," they have wandered in the bewildering mazes of this misunderstood doctrine, and have been led to reason : "Unless I am one of the elect, I cannot be saved. If I chance to be one of the number chosen from eternity, I shall be saved ; the matter does not lie with me, but with God ; I cannot change an eternal, irreversible decree. If, then, I am elected, I shall be saved ; if not, I shall be lost, and that without remedy. I fold my hands, and await, with all the trembling anxiety of suspense, the mighty result." We venture to affirm that this is a fair deduction from the view which has often been given to this blessed doctrine. Oh ! how dark, intricate, and uncertain is our condition, if this were so. No wonder there are so much darkness, uncertainty, and perplexity among professing Christians as to an interest in Christ, if such ideas are floating in their minds. Sinner, are you sheltering yourself under this refuge of lies ? Has the voice of conscience been hushed, and the strivings of the Spirit been resisted by this fatalism ? Oh ! flee from this refuge ; you cannot see the fullness and freeness of Gospel grace, you cannot with open face behold, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, if such a vail is upon your heart.—2 Cor. iii. 15. Oh ! flee from this refuge, under which you shelter yourself in the "neglect of the great salvation." You are throwing the blame of your neglect on God,

and God, in His word, is throwing it all on you. Which is right? Let God be true, and every man a liar.—Rom. iii. 4. O, repent of this thy wickedness, and pray God if the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.—Acts viii. 22.

We object most decidedly to such a view of a great truth: 1st. Because it makes God's choice or rejection of persons from eternity leave no room for *the sinner's choice or rejection*. If God's choice is eternal, the sinner's choice can have no effect. Hear Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live."—Deut. xxx. 19. Hear Joshua, "Choose you, this day, whom ye will serve," &c.—Josh. xxiv. 15. Hear Elijah, "How long halt ye between two opinions; if the Lord be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him."—1 Kings xviii. 21. Also Jer. xxi. 8. Hear our Saviour: One thing is needful, but Mary hath chosen the good part that shall not be taken from her.—Luke x. 42. 2d. It makes God's *secret decree* conflict with His *revealed will*. This view represents God decreeing a great portion, probably the greater portion, of mankind to eternal destruction; whereas His revealed will assures us, God our Saviour will have all men to be saved.—1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. "The Lord is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish." Our Saviour with tears exclaims over lost sinners: O, that thou hadst known, &c.—Luke xix. 42. 3d. It represents *God as beseeching many sinners to do that which is contrary to His own secret design and decree*. The secret decree represents God as dooming certain sinners to destruction, and His revealed truth says, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no

pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live ; turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die." Look unto me, and be ye saved, *all ye ends of the earth*, for I am God, and besides me there is none else.—Isa. xlv. 22. Now, many who hear this as a call from God, perish in unbelief. Now, could this really be a call addressed to them ? if so, he is beseeching them to run counter to His own eternal purpose. 4th. The real belief of such a doctrine must keep men in great *uncertainty* and *perplexity*. It introduces, at the very threshold of religious inquiry, a most perplexing and embarrassing subject. In the dispensations of God's providence, and in the common concerns of every day life, we do not feel thus puzzled, and unable to proceed ; and, O, surely, in the unconceivably important concerns of eternity, how necessary that we should have simplicity and light. 5th. *It reveals no principle* on which God acts in the salvation of some, and in the perdition of others. Now, God does not act in grace without a plan, any more than he does in nature and providence. He has decrees in the physical universe, and all things are influenced and regulated by these uniform and unchanging principles. He has decrees in the moral world, and all is in accordance with His great rules of procedure here. So has the eternal God His great principle, or principles, in grace. He proceeds according to arrangement, and the principle of His procedure in grace is as eternal as His purpose to save. And if we are enabled to discover some of the great principles by which He acts in nature, in the laws of mind and matter, so are we able to understand, in some measure, how He acts in grace. And here we would observe two great principles that reign in grace :

1st. God has decreed from eternity, that sinners can only be chosen, and are only chosen, by Him *in Christ*. He could not, so far as His word intimates, choose or elect sinners in any other way. The purpose to save sinners must be *in connexion with a work* to be achieved by His Son. To save sinners without such a work or atonement, would be to act against the principles of His moral government. This decree, to choose sinners only in Christ, is uniform and unchanging in grace, as gravitation is in nature. No sinner ever got to heaven, but through the door that has been opened. This is an eternal purpose. It is thus it is said: according as He hath chosen us *in Him* (Christ) before the foundation of the world.—Eph. i. 4. Having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure, which He *hath purposed in Himself*, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together, in one, all things *in Christ*, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even *in Him*—verse 10. The idea that God first chose certain sinners, and then gave them to Christ to be redeemed, is inconsistent with this principle. In choosing, He chose *in Christ*, and He could not, consistently with His government, choose otherwise; else, so far as we can see, He might have *saved* them without Christ, if he could *choose* them without Christ.

2d. Another great principle in election is this, that the sinner *must believe* in Christ in order to salvation. The great principle of procedure in grace is, believe and live; believe not and perish. When Christ sent forth his Apostles with the great commission, the great principle is adverted to—"Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature; he that believeth

shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." This great principle, in connection with which some are chosen to salvation and some are doomed to destruction, is a uniform principle reigning throughout the whole scheme from its commencement to its consummation. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament every where exhibit this great rule in grace. This is the "purpose of election; and that purpose shall stand and God will do all his pleasure."—Isa. xli. 10. Man or angel cannot change it. No saint in heaven, once a sinner on earth, will ever be able to say that he got into heaven without faith in the great sacrifice. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."—John iii. 36. "Without faith it is impossible to please God."—Heb. xi. Salvation is thus no fortuitous, accidental thing, that may or may not happen, in a hap-hazard way. No! there is a *law* in grace, an unalterable rule of procedure. We may as well try to stop the sun in his course, as change the unalterable law of grace, the great principle of God's electing love.

O, sinner, do you see any thing in the great doctrine of election that stands hindering you from entering into the kingdom? Instead of repelling you, does it not invite you—instead of standing between you and "the grace which is in Christ Jesus," does it not harmonize with the other doctrines of Scripture in pointing you to "Christ and him crucified" as the only refuge? Do you not hear the Spirit, in accents of the most winning sweetness, saying to you, yes, to you, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out," John vi. 37; "*whosoever* believeth shall not perish, but have eternal life," iii. 16; "*whosoever* will, let him come and take of the

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water of life?" Rev. xxii. 17. And does not the same great doctrine speak to you in the plainest and most powerful warning, "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost," if you believe not, you shall perish; "the wrath of God abideth on you?" O, sinner, do not by the suicidal act of unbelief, expose yourself to the infinite pressure of that great law in grace, "he that believeth not shall be damned."

Do you not see, then, O sinner, that there is no obstacle on God's part to your coming, or *any* sinner's coming, to Christ? The decree of election, instead of being *against* you, is seeking "to lead you to Christ," "to shut you up to the faith which is in Christ." O be not perplexed, then, with the inquiry at the outset, "Am I one of the elect?" This cannot be known by direct communication from heaven. You can only know whether you are one of the elect, by knowing whether you are a believer. If you are truly believing the Gospel, you are warranted to infer, that you are one of "the chosen." And if you are *first* to believe the Gospel, it is evident that, in the harmony of God's truth, nothing is put by God between you as a sinner and Christ as a Saviour; and, therefore, this great doctrine, so full of encouragement and grace to the sinner, instead of producing perplexity and embarrassment, is fitted to give stability and clearness, as it unfolds the great principles of God's administration in grace.

Another doctrine is sometimes so held as to obscure the Gospel, namely,

TOTAL INABILITY TO BELIEVE.

This doctrine is sometimes held in such a way as entirely to paralyze all the efforts of the preacher, and neutralize all the influence of Gospel truth on the hearer.

Nay, to such a degree does inconsistency sometimes exist, that while sinners are urged to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, while all the powers of reasoning, and all the persuasion of eloquence, are brought to bear on the subject, the sinner is, after all, told that he has no more *power to believe* than a dead man has to hear and obey. O, my friends, what a chilling doctrine is this to all evangelical effort. How much is it seen to be the offspring of human pride. It gives a plausible name to the want of clearness and earnestness in the preacher, and it gives a soft appellation to the inattention, hardness and wickedness of heart on the part of the unbelieving hearer. *He has no power to believe!* It tends to produce a sort of mutual contentment on the part of both, while the character of God in the matter is not so clearly vindicated. When Adam eat of the forbidden fruit, he sought to throw the blame on his wife, and his wife threw it on the serpent; but here the cause of the sinner's unbelief is unwarrantably attributed to God. Man cannot give him the power; Satan cannot, if he wished; angels cannot; nobody but God can; and therefore his unbelief is the withholding of God's power. If God in his word calls upon sinners to believe, and threatens them with everlasting destruction if they believe not the Gospel, and if all the while they have no power to believe, O what a critical position the sinner is placed in! Is any sinner sheltering himself under this deceitful refuge? If you are, O reader, I beseech you to hear God, who says, "As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye, *why will ye die.*"—Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

Can it be so that you can believe a fellow-creature, a creature but of yesterday, that knows nothing, Job viii.

9, and yet you are so constituted that you cannot believe God? Is a fellow-mortal so much more worthy of credit? Is there a necessity in you that you must call, and continue to call, God a liar? 1 John v. 10. Is it so that when a minister speaks to you in reference to ordinary concerns, you can believe what he says; but when that minister goes into the pulpit, you have no longer any power to believe him? Is it so that when he speaks to you on his own business, you can believe; but the moment he touches on matters between you and God, you have no power, no more than a dead man? O what a dark and inconsistent view of the relationship of man to God and to the word of God! O how incongruous do the invitations, and beseeching, and exhortation, and warning of God, in his word, appear with the idea that these cannot be believed and obeyed by the sinner until he get from God a power to believe! God beseeches, and God withholds the power!

It is indeed true, and it is an awful truth, that man, as a sinner, has no love to God nor to God's truth—"he hates the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be reprov'd; he loves the darkness rather than the light, because his deeds are evil." The powers of his soul are so deteriorated and debased by sin, that he loves himself and sin more than God and truth. There is a natural and positive disinclination to God's pure and holy truth; the carnal mind is enmity against God, Rom. viii. 7; but that aversion to God and his truth does not amount to a positive *inability to believe*. The powers of his mind that enable him to believe man, are the same powers by which he is to believe God, but "*he hates the light, because his deeds are evil.*" Let us take a case in mere morals by way of illustration. Here is a man debased by intemperance; the powers of his

body and soul have been sadly disorganized and deteriorated by the influence of strong drink. He has contracted a strong desire for the deluding poison. You come to him and tell him to abstain or he will ruin himself. He says he cannot; he cannot give it up. How cannot? Certainly not in the sense that he has not the same powers of body and mind as he originally had; the same power of mind and body by which he takes hold of the glass, is the same by which he takes hold of any thing else. There is no absolute necessity existing in the powers of his body and soul why he should take hold of it; the very power which he exercises in taking it, shows that he still has a power, if *he were so disposed*, not to take it; that is to say, if he really desired not to take it, he has power so to refrain; as well as to take it, because he desires to take it. He is under the influence of a depraved appetite and corrupt passion; these have acquired strength, and he is influenced by these. In prevailing on him to give up his wicked habit, you do not expect *first* to give him a better frame of body, and repair the injury to his mind, and then, after he has got these, he will desist himself. No; he must first renounce the cup, and then a healthier state of body and mind will follow. So it is in the case of the sinner; he is debased and fallen by iniquity, his soul is blinded, his "heart is hardened through the deceitfulness of sin," he is in love with sin. You come and proclaim the word of Him who hates sin; the sinner has no natural inclination to it; nay, he has a disinclination—yea, a disinclination that often, through continuance in sin, hardens into the most inveterate aversion to God and holy things, and after all your pleading and beseeching he remains in unbelief, "because the god of this world hath blinded his mind." The word, however, which by the Gospel

is preached unto sinners, is the great *moral influence* employed by the Spirit of God to convince and convert, to sanctify and save; the word is "the sword of the Spirit" to slay the enmity of the human heart. It is no *ordinary* truth to which the sinner's attention is directed, and it is no ordinary truth that, in his circumstances, would be fitted to draw his attention and influence his affections. But Gospel truth is so gracious—so full of sweetness—so full of love and kindness on God's part—it is thus exhibited, "God so loved the world;" that, taken in connection with the miserable and wretched condition of the sinner and his exposure to hell, it is fitted, by its conspicuous and unparalleled manifestation of love, to draw the sinner's attention, and, when believed, to melt the sinner's heart. It is thus that, however depraved and debased, the Spirit has often "lifted from the dunghill and set with princes," by "taking of the things of Christ and showing them unto men."—John xvi. 14.

But do you still say, O sinner, as an excuse for your unbelief, "Do I not read in the Word, 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' 'No man,' says Christ, 'cometh unto me, except the Father draw him?'" But how does God draw? Is it not with cords of love, as with the bands of a man? is it not with loving-kindness? But do you still shelter yourself under these passages, and such as these; do you say that these teach that the sinner has no power to believe? Then, let me reply, how came you to believe these statements of God's word? Who gave you power to believe *these* and not believe *the Gospel*? Are you able to believe *one* part and not *another*? Pray, tell me, and let any one tell me, how much of the Bible is

a sinner able to believe, and how much has he no power to believe. You will surely grant that an unbelieving sinner may believe some things in the Bible. Is it possible that he has power to believe the historical parts and not the doctrinal? Has an unconverted man power to believe what is told us about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; about Moses, about the Prophets, about the Apostles, but he has no power to believe *what is told us about Jesus Christ*? O, is it possible that man has perfect power to believe any thing and every thing in nature and revelation; but when you come to the most important thing for him to know and believe, even the Gospel, by which alone he is to be saved, that then, in reference *to that*, he has no more power to believe than a dead man? O, rest assured, that this is a delusion; it is one of Satan's deceptions when transformed into an angel of light.—2 Cor. xi. 14. It will not stand the light of God's truth, and harmonize with the principles of God's procedure.

Christ says, if I tell you the truth, why do ye not believe? he says, Ye *will* not come unto me that ye might have life.—John v. 40. How often would I have gathered you—but ye *would* not.—Mat. xxiii. 37. You remember the excuses of those to whom the invitation to the wedding feast was made. We are told, "they all began with one consent to make excuse," and among these we find one, "I have married a wife, and therefore I *cannot* come." The reason was, not that he had no power, but he had no inclination. So it is with sinners, "they love the darkness rather than the light, *because their deeds are evil.*" O, remember that this is the great condemnation, "that light is come into the world, and men *love the darkness*;" "that the Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed in flaming fire to take

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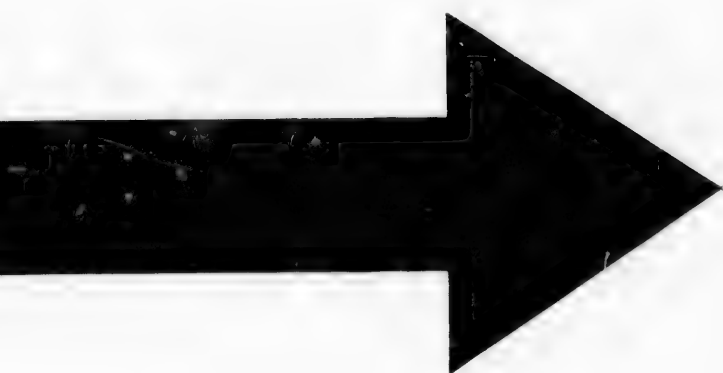
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vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8; that "the unbelieving" shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.—Rev. xxi. 8.

Let us not, however, be misunderstood. Do not suppose that it is stated or implied that man has a power to convert, regenerate, sanctify, and save himself. He has no such power in himself; he is without strength, Rom. v. 6; he is dead in trespasses and sins, Eph. ii. 1; he is under sentence of death as a sinner, Rom. vi. 23, and he is entirely unable, by his own efforts, to deliver himself from condemnation. Nothing, O sinner, but God, or the Spirit of God, can convert and save the soul—it is *his* work; every believer has reason to say, it is by the grace of God I am what I am.—1 Cor. xv. 10. But observe, what is contended for is this, that man *has* power to receive the influence of the Holy Spirit, or, in other words, he has power to receive the great truth which the Spirit employs as the moral instrument to influence the soul in conversion and sanctification; or, in plain terms, he has a power to believe the Gospel. In receiving Christ, in believing on his name, we have power to become the sons of God; and we are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.—John i. 12. We are "born of the will of God." Now, whether is this his secret or revealed will? That it is the latter, is seen from other passages.

We are born of incorruptible seed of the word of God, and this is the word that, by the Gospel, is preached unto you.—1 Peter i. 23—25. Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.—1 John v. 1. O, reader, how true it is that there is no excuse for your unbelief. "He that believeth not God





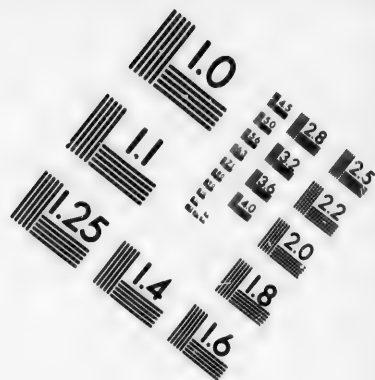
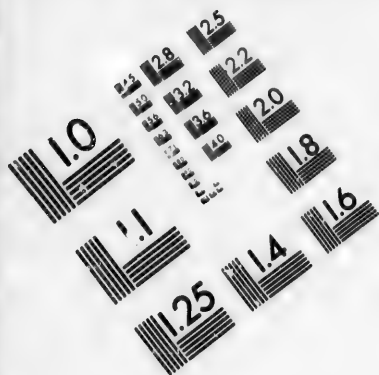
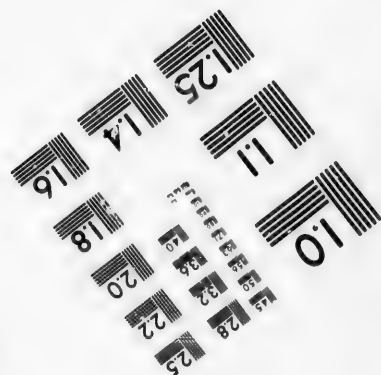
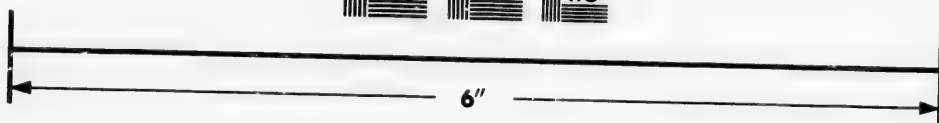
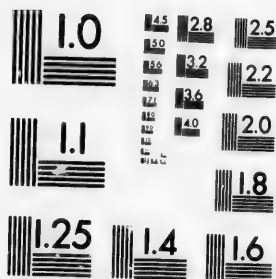


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hath made him a liar, because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son." If we receive the *witness of man*, the *witness of God* is greater.—1 John v. 9, 10. Take heed, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.—Heb. iii. 12.

But we proceed to another cause why the Gospel is often hid. It is often hid by

LIMITED VIEWS OF THE WORK OF CHRIST.

That limited views of the work of Christ have considerably prevailed cannot be denied, and that they have done much to obscure the Gospel must also be apparent to every one that apprehends the truth with clearness. They have done much to injure the fulness and freeness of the Gospel, and, by obscuring these, they impair its lustre, its power and applicability as "a Gospel for every creature."—Mark xvi. 15. There is no truth that seems clearer in the Bible than this, that the great work of Christ has a general aspect towards the whole human family, that it is not restricted in its fitness, fulness, and freeness, to any persons, nations, or characters. It is a great work commensurate with the wants, and co-extensive with the sinners, of the whole world; that it is not only fit to be preached to every creature, but Christ's commission embraced all nations.—Mat. xxviii. 19. Take away this universality of sufficiency and adaptation, and you "take away the key of knowledge, not knowing how to enter in yourselves, and those that are entering in, ye hinder."—Luke xi. 52.

Let it be granted that the "finished" work of Christ is the ground, and the *only ground*, of a sinner's acceptance with God; that his "obedience unto death" magnified the law and made it honourable; that it

satisfied God's justice, and vindicates, yea, glorifies, the perfections of God's character, and that by it, and *it alone*, God is seen to be just, while he is the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus.—Rom. iii. 26. Let it be granted that the work of Christ is that which makes the great difference between the condition of man as a sinner, and the condition of fallen angels as sinners. If this be the only ground on which to rest; the only rock on which our feet can be placed; the only foundation on which to build; the only refuge to which to flee; the only blood that cleanses from sin; is it not, then, an inquiry of vital importance to you, O reader, and to me? Is there a sufficiency in that great propitiatory work for you and for me? Have you and I God's warrant for building and resting our hopes here? O, fellow-sinner, have you ever put this great question, are you desirous to know is there a Saviour for you—a Gospel for you? Shall we tell you Christ died only for some, that his work is consequently only sufficient for some—for a certain portion known only to God? Do you feel satisfied? Can you see whether the rock is broad enough to enable *you* to rest your weary feet on it? O, what a hiding of the Gospel. Limit the work of Christ, and you limit the power and universal fitness of the Gospel. Let us remember, that if there are any for whom Christ has done nothing, they can no more be saved than could Satan himself. And here let us make a few observations:—1st, If the work of Christ is limited only to some of the human race in its sufficiency, then how am I, or are you, to know whether it is sufficient for us? 2d, We would like to ask any professing Christian who believes in a limited atonement, how *he* came to have a knowledge of a personal interest in Christ's work? Does the Gospel reveal anything to him that it does not reveal to

you and others? Does he say, that he infers that Christ died for him, from the fact that he is a believer! Then, let us ask, how did he become a believer? what did he believe? Is not Christ's work the *first* thing to be believed in order to salvation? 3d, If Christ died only for some, then the rest of the human family could no more be saved than the devil and fallen angels. Christ can only save those for whom his work is sufficient, and no others; therefore, all those that perish eternally, had no atonement made for them, and we need never feel regret that a sinner dies in impenitence, for Christ's work was not sufficient for him. Will it be possible that the finally lost will be able to say, "Christ never did, nor suffered anything, so that I could be saved?" This would take away the anguish of remorse of conscience: this would convince him that the want was in Christ as well as in himself. 4th, If Christ died only for those who shall believe, and for none else, it follows that the final rejectors of the Gospel *did what was perfectly right*. They had no right to believe "the good news." Christ never died for them; therefore Christ was really no Saviour for them, and therefore, in rejecting him, they were perfectly justified. In *disbelieving the Gospel* they were *believing the truth*. O, how inconsistent with Scripture, is such a doctrine. Men are to be condemned for not believing, and this is "*the condemnation*:" "The Lord Jesus Christ is to be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that *obey not the Gospel*;" and yet, according to this view, there was really no Gospel for them; yea, in disobeying it, they were doing what was perfectly just. O, what a black cloud does this interpose between the sinner's soul and the crucified Saviour—Him whose flesh is given for the life of the world. 5th and lastly, Such a view

of Christ's work is entirely inconsistent with the plain statements and illustrations of Gospel truth in the Scriptures. So many of these have been interspersed through what has already been written, that we need scarcely point your attention farther to these. Let us, however, make reference to a few. He is the Lamb of God, to take away the sin of the world.—John i. 29. God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth—iii. 16. He came that the world might be saved—verse 17. He died for all.—2 Cor. v. 14, 15. He gave his life a ransom for all.—1 Tim. ii. 6. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world.—1 John ii. 2. He bought those who deny him, and who bring upon themselves swift destruction.—2 Peter ii. 1. It is thus he represents himself as the “light of the world;” as lifted up, like the brazen serpent, that *whosoever* believeth, &c., John iii. 14; as giving his flesh for the life of the world, vi. 51, and so on. O, dear reader, be assured that it is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*. What word could be more appropriate to denote the universal fulness and freeness of Gospel grace? How else could it be a Gospel for every creature? There is nothing that can save you but the work of Christ, and O, comply with the invitation of the Gospel, and be assured that there is length enough and breadth enough on that rock for you; yes, for you. The Gospel commission is thus represented—“As many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage, Mat. xxii. 9; and, although sinners have complied, and are doing so still, we have authority to say yet there is room, Luke xiv. 22; yes, room for you, room in the infinite fulness of

Christ's work, and in the infinite fulness of Christ's grace for you, even for you.

We pray you to observe that you are not only to consider that Christ is able and willing to save, as if your mind dwelt on what He could now do ; but mark carefully what He *has already done* for this great object. Do not feel or speak as if Christ had yet to do something to satisfy God's law for you ; remember that work has *already been finished*, and you are now to be reconciled to God by the death of His Son.—Rom. v. 10. We pray you, also, to observe, that while Christ's work has a universal sufficiency and adaptation, do not allow this generality of its aspect to take away from its applicability and validity to your case. You may hear of a whole town in some distant country being laid waste by fire or sword, but you feel none of that strength and intensity of interest that you would do if it were your own property, or if your own life were at stake. You hear of some thousands of pounds being left to some individuals, but you have no personal interest, as the legacy does not include you. But it is not so with the word of God, as regards its threatenings or its invitations. They are often, indeed, presented with a general aspect ; but, remember you have a *personal* interest involved : " The Lord Jesus will be revealed in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel." That threatening refers to all ungodly and unbelieving sinners ; and to you, if you are so, and will be executed on you, if you remain so. On the other hand, the invitations of God are as wide, and include you : " Christ came to save sinners, and whosoever believeth shall be saved." This applies to you with all the applicability of a *personal* invitation. It is a mes-

sage from God unto thee ; or, as Nathan said unto David, Thou art the man.—2 Sam. xii. 7. Contemplate, then, like Thomas, the pierced hands, and the wounded side, of your blessed Redeemer, and be not faithless, but believing, and say with him, " My Lord and my God."—John xx. 28.

Another thing that has tended to hide the Gospel has been

LIMITED VIEWS OF THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT.

The Holy Spirit is represented in Scripture as the Divine Agent in the conversion and sanctification of the souls of men. This appears more peculiarly His office and work in the scheme of grace. It is thus that we must be born of the Spirit, John iii. 5, that we are saved by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost.—Tit. iii. 5. The conversion and sanctification of a soul is thus the work of God, it is not man's work ; it is no more man's work than is Christ's work man's work. Christ might have suffered for the sins of men, but if the Spirit had not taken of the things of Christ, and shewed them unto us ; if there had been no divine revelation of the great " truth as it is in Jesus," then, according to the present arrangement in grace, which requires the sinner to believe in order to salvation, he could not have been saved, for how could he believe in Him of whom he had not heard.—Rom. x. 14. The Spirit's work, then, in the present arrangement of grace, is necessary as well as Christ's work. If faith is necessary, faith cannot exist without the truth, and the truth cannot exist without the agency of the Holy Ghost. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.—Rom. x. 17.

The views which we consider have done injury to the success of the Gospel by reason of their hiding it, are those which represent the unbelief and rejection of the Gospel by the sinner as traceable to the want of will or intention on the part of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes the sinner's rejection of the Gospel, and consequent perdition, are traced to God the Father, because He decreed them from all eternity to destruction. Sometimes to God the Son, as he only died for a certain number, and therefore the rest could not be saved, the legal obstacle to their pardon was not removed; and sometimes, as we have mentioned, to the Holy Spirit, as withholding, in His sovereignty, the only influence fit to make the truth effectual. Representations are made, on the other hand, to the effect that the Father invites all, the Son's atonement is sufficient for all, but the Holy Spirit is unwilling and reluctant to save all, and withholds from all who do not believe, the necessary influence to give them power to believe. This latter represents the persons of the Godhead conflicting in their desires and designs. This makes the sinner think he must wait till the Spirit work in him, while the Spirit is waiting on him, and striving with him. The Spirit is taking the things of Christ, and showing them to men in a read and preached Word, but the sinner's attention is taken off the work of Christ to look for and wait for the work of the Spirit; and thus the work of the Spirit interposes between the soul of the sinner and Christ crucified, and if Christ is hidden, the Gospel is hid, and souls are lost. Sinner, are you sheltering yourself under the plea, that you must wait for the Spirit—that you have no power to believe—that you must wait? O, be assured, God waits on you; he waits to be gracious, and instead of the want of will on the part of the Spirit, it is the blinding influence

of the god of this world, or the deceitfulness of your own heart, that is making you resist and reject the truth.

Be assured, that there is no person of the Godhead opposed to any man's salvation; there is a perfect equality of sincerity, earnestness, and design, in the blessed Trinity for this object. The desires and longings in the Father, Son, and Spirit, are the same; if the one is reluctant, so are they all; if one is willing, the Godhead is willing. How does the Bible represent this subject? Observe the harmony—"God so loved *the world*"—John iii. 16; Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world—1 John ii. 2; and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, when "he is come, he will convince *the world* of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment."—John xvi. 8. The aspect of the Spirit towards man's salvation, is as general as the aspect of the Father and the Son. The Father gave the Son, the Son gave the Spirit, and the Spirit has given us the word. Divine truth "has been revealed to the holy Apostles and Prophets by the Spirit."—Eph. iii. 5. Now, if the Bible is "the mind of the Spirit," the expression of the will and desires of the Spirit, O do we not see that the beseechings and longings of the Spirit are as strong and as general, as the desires and designs of the Father and Son? Do we not see that, if "God is not willing that *any* should perish," and if Christ prayed "that *the world* may believe," John xvii. 21, surely the Spirit is not reluctant; is not limited in his desires and designs, but seeks to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. The aspect of the Spirit towards men is as wide, as universal, as the call of the Gospel. The Gospel is "for every creature," and the Spirit's work is for every creature. Wherever the word of God goes, the influence of the Spirit extends, as a regene-

rating and sanctifying influence. If the Spirit is limited in the extent of his influence, it is because the word of God is limited. Wherever the word is read and preached, the Spirit is working; wherever it is received, the Spirit is received; wherever it is rejected, the Spirit is rejected. "He that receiveth you," says Christ to his disciples, "receiveth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me."—Luke x. 16. So with the word; he that receives the word "which by the Gospel is preached," receives the Spirit; and he that rejects the word, rejects the Spirit. The Spirit employs the word as his sword to slay the enmity of sinners. He employs it to renew and sanctify the soul; and, in the ordinary arrangement of grace, the Spirit never converts and saves, unless through the instrumentality of the Gospel; and if the Gospel is limited in its diffusion, it limits the extension of the Spirit's regenerating influence. But God has committed the extension of the Gospel to the instrumentality of human agency; and the blame rests on man, on the Church, if the Gospel is not preached, because the commission is to go to all nations, and preach the Gospel to every creature; and the Spirit's work is as wide; "lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

Sinner, if you have heard the Gospel, you have no excuse—no shadow of excuse, in remaining in unbelief on the ground that you must wait for the Spirit. In hearing the gospel and rejecting it, you do so, not *passively*, by being uninfluenced by the Spirit, but *actively*, by opposing and resisting the influence of the Spirit. It is thus that the Spirit *wills*, but *ye will not*. The Spirit *calls*, but *ye refuse*; and thus did Stephen tell the persecuting mob, "*ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*; as your fathers did, so do ye."—Acts vii. 51.

The Spirit does not stand between you, O sinner, and the finished work of Christ. No, no. He points you to the Cross; he takes of the things of Christ to show them unto you. "He glorifies Christ."—John xvi. 14. He seeks to reconcile you to God *by the death of his Son*.—Rom. v. 10. There is no reluctance in the Spirit, no apathy towards you, no exclusion of you. The Spirit, in concluding the word, closes his inspired statements with an earnest, free, and impartial call, as if he could not allow his miraculous influence to cease from the earth, till he had once more expressed his longings and desires, "The *Spirit* and the bride say, come, and let him that heareth say, come, and let him that is athirst, come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."—Rev. xxii. 17.

Still farther, another thing that has tended to obscure the Gospel, has been

PERPLEXING VIEWS OF THE NATURE OF FAITH.

As faith is necessary to salvation, its importance has led to much philosophising about what it is, and the inquirer's attention has often been taken off the truth in order to examine and analyse an act of his own mind, and thus the Gospel has often been hid, and the soul has been darkened and lost. A great many kinds of faith have been discovered and defined, so many, indeed, that persons, instead of inquiring about the *kind of truth* to be believed, have been endeavouring to find out the *kind of faith* they are to make use of in believing the truth. Indeed, to such an extent has this obtained currency, that instead of suspecting that it was clear and right views of God's truth that they required, they have thought that they knew the Gospel well enough, but all

they wanted was the right kind of faith to believe it in the right way.

The obscurity and perplexity as to the nature of faith may, in a great measure, be attributable to the confounding of the act of the mind in believing for the thing believed. Faith, simply considered as an act of the mind, is the same whether we believe God or man. The great difference results not from the act of the mind, but from the object believed. For example, if I see a most beautiful object that fills me with delight, and then turn to some loathsome object that fills me with aversion, the difference of effect does not arise from *my seeing, simply considered*, but the objects which I see. Suppose tidings were to reach a mother that her child has fallen into the river, and is in danger of drowning; in believing the alarming intelligence she is filled with agitation and distress. In this condition, word is brought her that her child is rescued and safe; she is filled with joy. Now, the act of mind in believing both reports is the same, but it is the *thing* believed that produces the difference. Good news produce joy, bad news produce grief. The influence on the soul corresponds with the character of the truth believed. Were it to be stated that saving faith is an apprehension of, and confidence in, the work of Christ, that it comprehends love to God, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, that it embraces zeal for the glory of God, and constraining love for the cause of Christ; to suppose that such a statement was a definition of faith, would be to confound the *act of the mind* in the reception of truth, and the *influence on the mind* by the truth received. For example, were you asked what is seeing? it would be improper to reply, it is a power by which we are much gratified, and made to stand in devout admiration. Such a statement would

be confounding the distinction between the object seen and the act by which we see it. Were you to define tasting to be a power by which we perceive that which is sweet and pleasant; this would be entirely improper, for there are many things which, if tasted, would be sour, bitter, or otherwise disagreeable, just as many objects when seen would fill us with consternation and sorrow. So also in reference to faith or believing; it is the act of the mind whereby the knowledge of things is received into the soul, and the influence produced has a correspondence with the nature of the things believed. You have the power of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, &c., but, if there be nothing to be seen, heard, tasted, or smelt, there will be no perception of anything. So you have the power to believe; but Divine truth, in order to influence the soul, must be received into the soul by faith. Faith is the channel through which it comes into contact with the soul.

There is an expression sometimes made use of which may be occasioned by the manner in which faith has often been divided and defined, but which is not strictly correct. Faith of the Gospel is often called *Saving Faith*, as if to distinguish it from wrong ways of believing. Now, be it observed, that *faith, as an act of the mind, is not saving*. The saving effect is not produced by the act of the mind, but by the nature of the truth received by the mind—it is *saving truth, Gospel truth*. Just as the window is not that which gives light, but it is the opening or medium through which the light of the sun shines into our apartment; so faith in itself does not enlighten, sanctify, and save, but it is the opening in the mind through which the rays of truth, the beams of the Great Sun of Righteousness, shine into our dark souls.

"By grace are ye saved *through faith*." It is the Gospel that saves; and the Gospel, when received into the soul by faith, produces an influence correspondent with its power, it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.—Rom. i. 16.

Faith has no merit or influence *in itself*, abstractly considered. The merit of our salvation is all traceable to Jesus Christ, to the grace of God in Christ, "for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things."—Rom. xi. 36. Suppose that you are called upon to look at a splendid painting by some first-rate artist, does your seeing the picture in all its beauty entitle you to any share in the praise of the performance? Suppose you look with admiring wonder at one of the Pyramids of Egypt, does your seeing it give you a claim to the honour of rearing, or aiding to rear, one of those giants of art? No! assuredly not. Do you believe in the victories achieved by Bonaparte, or the Duke of Wellington, or by Julius Cæsar, in more ancient times; but would you not be considered as a fool or a madman to think that, because you have heard of, and believed in, their heroic achievements, that therefore your brow should be decked with laurels won by these victories? So, O fellow-sinner, faith has nothing meritorious *in itself*. Faith in Jesus Christ is believing in what *He* did and suffered for us. He came to destroy death, and him that had the power of death; that is, the Devil.—Heb. ii. 14. Faith in Christ's work entitles you to no more of the *merit* of your salvation than does your believing in the conquests of Cæsar or Napoleon entitle you to share in their *merits*. Christ's work was achieved for sinners, therefore for you, O reader, and, by believing, you enjoy *the eternal benefit* of that work, but you come in for no share of *the merit*.

It is not of works, lest any man should boast.—Eph. ii. 9. Boasting is excluded, Rom. iii. 27; therefore it is *of faith*, that it might be *by grace*—iv. 16.

The great point, then, dear reader, is not so much, *how* am I to believe? as, *what* am I to believe? If you are in a lost state, and I am in a state of grace and safety, the difference does not result because you and I know and believe the Gospel, the same Gospel; but there is some peculiarity in my faith as an act of my mind, that is not in yours. O no; the difference arises from the great alternative, is the Gospel a hidden Gospel or not? If you know and believe *the Gospel*, you are saved. "Blessed are the people that know the joyful sound."—Ps. lxxxix. 15. If you are yet in obscurity as to your state, do not suppose that you know the Gospel well enough, and you only want *the peculiarity* in the mode of believing it. O, sinner, are you sheltering yourself under this delusion? Are you waiting for the *right kind* of faith? Does the Gospel become a dead letter to you, because you think it cannot be believed and trusted in, in the ordinary way in which you usually believe and trust in a fellow-creature? Is the Gospel thus a hidden Gospel? Does *the kind of faith* stand as an obstacle between your soul and the open face of Jesus Christ? Be assured, there is no such obstacle necessarily there, none put there by God in his decrees; by Christ in his work; or by the Spirit in the word. The word of God does not come to tell you to look to your faith—to look to an act of your own mind, but to look to the Lord Jesus Christ, to "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Suppose that you are sitting near the window of your apartment, you are called upon to look to some interesting object in the

field or the street ; if you keep looking at the window, at the panes of glass, at the kind of glass, at the size of the window or the glass, you will not be able to see the object with any degree of clearness ; but if you look at the object, you will not think of the glass, you will be so engaged in admiring the object, that you will, for the time, forget about the window. So it is in the Gospel of Christ, when the soul looks through the window of faith to the Lamb of God that takes away our sin, we do not think of our faith, but of the great and glorious object contemplated by faith. When a mother hears of her child in danger, or a man hears of a fortune being left him, or a prisoner hears of a pardon being granted him, they do not wait to examine and analyse by what process are these truths to get into their hearts in order to influence them. O, no, no ! So, when the Gospel of Christ comes to the poor perishing sinner, he is not required to examine what kind of faith he must profess in order to believe. No, no ! He is to receive the testimony of God, and, "if he receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater." "Behold the Lamb of God." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ." "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (Christ) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins ; and by him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses ; beware, therefore, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish.'"—Acts xiii. 39—41.

But we go on to observe, sixthly, another cause whereby the Gospel is often hid arises from

DIRECTING THE MIND INWARDLY TO ITS OWN ACTS,
FEELINGS, &c., INSTEAD OF OUTWARDLY TO CHRIST
AND HIS WORK.

This is a fruitful source of evil, and has often thrown a dark cloud over "the glory of God in the face of Jesus." There are two ways in which an object may not be seen, either by the intervention of some object between you and it, or by your attention's being directed to something else that lies in another direction. Now, if Christ and Him crucified be the great object set before the sinner's attention in the Scriptures—if "*He* is evidently set before our eyes crucified among us"—if we are "to behold the Lamb of God," it is surely evident that, being directed to look into ourselves, into our own acts, feelings, or emotions, we are called to look in another direction than to Christ, and this must tend, while we are so doing, to keep us in uncertainty and darkness. This strikingly sets before us a great distinction between *conviction* and *conversion*. Looking into ourselves may be the means of showing us our guilt and pollution. But a mere conviction of guilt and wretchedness is entirely different from conversion. It may precede and lead to conversion, but the two are quite distinct. This is abundantly set before us in the case of the Israelites that were bitten by fiery flying serpents. The Israelite, when bitten, might have looked to his wound; he might have felt its pain, been alarmed at its fatal symptoms, and agitated at the certain approach of death. He might have cried out in agony and distress. But all this alarm and dismay in themselves had no effect in curing him; the means of cure were entirely different. He must look *away from himself*, from his wound, from his fatal symptoms, to the serpent of brass

erected on the pole, and, in looking *there*, he was cured. So, O sinner, you may see your guilt, your unworthiness, your wickedness; you may be afraid, terror-stricken, conscience-smitten; under the pressure of an awakened conscience you may cry out in intense bitterness, "What must I do to be saved?" But until you look *away from yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ*, till you look to him who "was lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish," who now stands *to your soul* in the relation that the brazen serpent did *to the body* of the Israelite, you cannot be saved. *Conviction* is the soul turned *inward* to its vileness, wretchedness, and misery; *conversion* is the soul turned *outward* to the Lord Jesus Christ as "the propitiation for our sins."

There is another mistake under this head, by which persons live in doubt and uncertainty, and have little or no comfort or satisfaction in religion. They profess to believe in Christ, but they are continually looking to the acts and feelings of their hearts in order to obtain a warrant to trust in God as their father and in Christ as their Saviour. Instead of seeking the warrant for trusting in Christ in God's own word, they look for it in their own hearts. They wish to see from their feelings or conduct whether they may rely on Jesus as their Saviour, and thus it is they are continually trying to produce these feelings or emotions in order to obtain the warrant. For example, they try to produce love to God before they know whether they have faith, and, in aiming at love, they would draw from the love which they try to produce, that they probably have faith. They seek for fruit before they know whether the root has been planted. *There is an order in grace as well as in nature.* In nature we have not first the fruit, then the blossom, then the leaves, then the branches, and last of all the

root ; but we have first the root, and it will be vain to hope for blossoms or fruit before the root is in the soil. So in grace, we have not first holiness, then joy, then love, then faith ; no ! we have first faith whereby the truth is received into the soul—faith works by love, Gal. v. 6, and purifies the heart, and the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, &c.—Gal. v. 22. Instead of these fruits being produced by a direct effort of the sinner, they can only be produced by the enlightening, sanctifying, and supporting influence of the Spirit through the truth ; and, therefore, instead of first producing emotions and feelings, and then looking to Christ, we must see that this is the reverse order ; and we must first look to the Lord Jesus, and the fruits of faith will follow ; they will not precede faith. Love is not first and then faith, but faith produces love, “ faith works by love ; ” “ we love him because he first loved us.”—1 John iv. 19.

There are many who, if they should feel at any time that they had pleasurable emotions of a religious nature ; for example, if they were delighted with some preacher, peculiarly devotional in prayer, or pleasurably excited during praise ; if they have felt some particular calmness and sweetness of mind during circumstances of trial, or have otherwise felt seemingly religious emotions, would be apt to draw comfort and satisfaction from these acts and feelings, and they do so in such a way as to show that it is the existence of such states and frames of mind that gives them a ground of confidence before God for the pardon of sin. Instead of their ground of confidence being the work of Christ, and the warrant for resting on that work being the word of God, they look to their own feelings, whereas their feelings should be the result, and not the cause, of confidence. Justification does not

flow from peace, but peace flows from justification. Instead of thinking, because they now feel love to God, *therefore* they may hope for salvation, let them see that evangelical love and obedience spring out of faith in Christ. "Faith works by love." "The love of Christ constrains us." Before knowing whether they are believers or not, Christians or not, they want to see whether they are bringing forth fruits; whether they are loving God, desiring to serve him; whether they are turning from sin. They are wanting to enjoy what is called *experience*; whereas it is evident that this is an entire inversion of the order of grace, and is the source of much indecision, ignorance, and error. All Christian experience must be founded on Christ; it must flow from him as the source; he is the vine and believers are the branches, "without me," says he, "ye can do nothing."—John xv. 5. Instead of experience producing faith, faith must precede true experience; and we cannot infer faith from experience, unless we can trace our experience up to faith. If you were to come to a river of considerable depth and breadth, and, after leaving it and travelling several hundred miles, you should come to a smaller stream, it would be a mere presumption in you to conclude that the larger river and the smaller stream were the same; that the one flowed from the other, unless you could trace the larger stream up to the lesser.

Let this part of our subject be illustrated by the following analogy:—Suppose that, on account of some crime committed against your country, you were lying in prison, under sentence of death, and awaiting with trembling the day of execution, your situation was one of deep solemnity and despair. Suppose, however, that on account of some satisfaction offered to the govern-

ment by the mediation and intercession of some very exalted and influential person, the king should send you a message, to the effect, that a certain great person had interposed in your behalf, that he had submitted to much on your account, and that, on account of what he had done and suffered for you, the king was willing to pardon you, and that he required of you to confess your guilt, and see the honourable way in which he does pardon you through the satisfaction offered for you by another. Suppose that this message comes to you, if you do not understand it, you will not feel joy and peace, or, if you understand its import, but do not believe it to be true, you will still be without peace. But if you saw the king's seal on the letter and other evidences that it is genuine, and the good news are true, would you not feel joy and peace in believing; would you not be full of gratitude, and feel under obligation to love and serve your benefactor? Yes! you would draw your satisfaction and joy from the message itself, from the good news. You would not wait and see first whether you had love and gratitude, before you felt a warrant to believe the message. No; you would not have peace and joy till you believed; and the idea of trying to produce joy and peace, and then believe, would be foolish. The ground of your confidence was the message of the king, and not your love and gratitude produced after believing.

Such, fellow-sinner, is our condition as sinners against God, we are condemned by his immutable law, and under sentence of death. But God has sent us "good news," "glad tidings of great joy," "the ministry of reconciliation;" "God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses. Christ died for our sins, and he is now before the throne making intercession for us." We are to confess our sin,

to ask pardon for the sake of Christ, looking to his obedience unto death as a perfect satisfaction to God's law. It is by believing the glad tidings, we will be glad, we will rejoice, we will feel under eternal obligations "to live to Him who died for us." Emotions, affections, and good works, will follow as fruits, "faith will work by love and purify the heart," and thus you will give evidence that you are a believer, a sinner saved by grace, that being justified by faith you have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, and that you rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—Rom. v. 1, 2. The Ethiopian Eunuch did not wait to find that he had joy before he could believe, but he believed and joy followed as a consequence of faith. So with the Jailor at Philippi, and so will it be with you, O reader, if you believe in the name of the only begotten Son of God, "the God of hope will fill you with all joy and peace in believing."

In perusing the biographies of eminent Christians, and also looking to the experience of professing believers, we will find that the error under this head is by no means an uncommon one, and tends to produce doubt and darkness when there should be light and peace. The observations of LUTHER, who passed through deep struggles of mind, and who knew from experience the false refuges of the heart, are worthy of attention. "The desire *to justify ourselves* is the spring of all our distress of heart; but he who receives Christ as a Saviour has *peace*, and not only peace, but purity of heart. *All sanctification of the heart is a fruit of faith*; for faith is a Divine work which changes us, and gives us a new birth emanating from God himself. Beware, my dear George, of aspiring *after such purity as that thou mayest not have to acknowledge thyself a sinner*, for Christ only dwells with sinners. He came down from heaven,

where he abode with the just, to dwell also with sinners. Meditate often on this love of Christ, and you will taste its unspeakable comfort. If *our labours and afflictions* could give peace to the conscience, why did Christ die upon the cross? You will find *peace in Him alone*, despairing of yourself and of your works, and beholding with what love he spreads his arms to you, *taking all your sins on himself*, and bestowing on you all his righteousness." The eminent WHITEFIELD has the following remarks bearing on this subject:—"My dear friends, beware of resting on your first conversion. You that are young believers in Christ, you should be looking out for fresh discoveries of the Lord Jesus Christ every moment; *you must not build upon your past experiences, you must not build on a work within you, but always come out of yourselves to the righteousness of Jesus Christ* WITHOUT YOU; you must be always coming as poor sinners to draw water out of the wells of salvation; you must be forgetting the things that are behind, and continually pressing to those that are before. You must keep up a tender, close walk with Jesus Christ. There are many of us who lose our peace by our untender walk; *something or other gets in betwixt Christ and us, and we fall into darkness*. For Christ's sake, if you know Christ, keep close by him; if God have spoken peace, O, keep that peace by *looking up to Jesus Christ every moment*."

The error under consideration is strikingly illustrated in the conversion of Mrs Little, of Glasgow, whose memoir has been published by her husband, and has done extensive good to the spread of the simple truth. "She found that she had been crying, 'Lord give me salvation,' and pointing him to her *own merits and good works*, while the Lord was saying, 'Sinner take salva-

tion, and pointing her *to Jesus and his work*. That she was exclaiming, 'Lord, love me and pity me,' and directing him *forward* to the awful doom that was awaiting her; while God was saying, 'I do love thee and pity thee,' and pointing her *back* to his Son on the cross of Calvary. That she was saying, 'Lord, I use the means, I attend thy house regularly, I teach the young thy ways, I pray, I do all the duties incumbent on a Christian;' while God was saying, 'Sinner, these may be *your* means, but they are not *mine*. Believing on the Lord Jesus Christ is *the* means—is *my* means.' Formerly she was *looking into her own heart* to find peace and find evidence that she was a believer, but found none; now, however, *she looked entirely away from, and out of, herself*, as it were, and, *fixing the eye of faith upon Jesus*, peace and joy was the immediate consequence."

Reader, have you been in the same error, have you been looking inward to see if there was anything good in you, anything to give you a ground of confidence before God? Have you been trying to produce something good, that so you may venture on Christ, and have a comfortable hope in death? O, be assured, as long as you look to yourself, you will be in darkness; you must look to another, even the Lord Jesus Christ, Him who has been lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Believe and live; and when you believe, you must keep continually looking to Christ; He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. While you run the race set before you, you must keep "*looking to Jesus*, the author and finisher of our faith." If you would "grow in grace," it is by growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord.—2 Peter iii. 18. O, go not about to

establish a *righteousness of your own*, but submit yourself to the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ.—Rom. x. 3. Keep this prominently before your attention, Christ *first*, and duties *after*—not duties first, and Christ after. Christ must be the *beginning*, the *middle*, and the *end* of our confidence.

Another error, and the last we shall at present consider, is one very prevalent; it is one of a very practical character, and exceedingly injurious to the interests of Christ's cause. It is this:

THAT ORDINANCES OBSERVED, AND DUTIES PERFORMED,
ARE FOR THE PURPOSE OF GETTING SALVATION,
OF BEING SAVED AT LAST, OF GETTING TO HEAVEN
WHEN WE DIE.

It is true that salvation, *in its consummation*, is still future, it is to be revealed in the last time, 1 Peter i. 5; and thus, "we are saved by hope;" the Christian's "helmet is the hope of salvation;" and thus, too, we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.—Rom. v. 2. But it is also true, that believers *now* are in a state of grace, in a state of salvation; they are *now* justified, they enjoy pardon of sin *now*, they are freed from the condemnation of sin *now*, they have peace with God *now*, they are *already* passed from death unto life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God; and now, being made free from sin, and become servants to God, they have their fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.—Rom. vi. 22. Being emancipated from the guilt of sin, by faith in Christ, they are "Christ's freemen," and they are to walk in "the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free." Being once dead, they now "are made alive," "and live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them, and rose again." They

are to reckon themselves alive unto God through Jesus Christ.—Rom. vi. 11. “They yield themselves to God as those that are alive from the dead.” They walk in “newness of life;” they are “new creatures in Christ Jesus,” “created in Christ Jesus *unto good works* ;” they are to *shew forth the praises* of Him who hath called them out of darkness into His marvellous light.” A true believer, then, considers himself as a sinner saved by grace, now accepted, now saved ; he looks to the work of Christ, and *to it alone*, as his salvation. He does not mix his *own* with *Christ’s*. He casts himself on the mercy of God in Christ, trusts to nothing else as a ground of acceptance ; and all that he does, all his prayers, praises, labours, trials, are not for the purpose of getting salvation—no, no, he looks to Christ, and to Him alone, for that, and in resting there, he feels safe ; he can, and does, commit all this into the hands of his Redeemer, and instead of living to save himself, to work out a righteousness for himself, he sees the Gospel plan is to *submit*, and he *has submitted* to the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

But look to a great portion of professing Christians in all churches ; in some, however, more than in others. How many go to church, engage in the duties of the sanctuary, go to the Lord’s table, attend prayer-meetings, engage in devotions in the closet and in the family, and yet, there is reason to fear, that they do all these things in order to get salvation at last. Instead of yielding themselves to God, living to Him who died for them, they are all the time observing ordinances and performing duties to secure salvation at last ; and thus they practically declare that they are *not yet* Christians, they are *not yet* seeing the work of Christ as a finished, perfect work, and the only ground of justification before God.

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It is, indeed, a most serious view of the case presented to us in the history of the professing church. Here are hundreds and thousands professing to be Christians, who live entirely to themselves, who make their own salvation the object of their thoughts, prayers, and efforts. They do not feel *present* peace, *present* pardon, *present* salvation, but, looking for this only at the end of life, their aims and desires concentrate on themselves, and Christ's cause languishes, because all seek their own things, not the things that are Jesus Christ's.—Phil. ii. 21. If all professors were really true Christians, who, with full dependence on Christ, not being afraid to venture their eternal all on Christ, freed from all fear on this account as to their own personal safety, were to live not to themselves, but to Him who died for them, to live to the glory of God, for the advancement of Christ's cause and kingdom in the world; if the true, benevolent spirit of Christianity prevailed, which emancipates from making self our object and our aim, and opens up a free scope for living to God, without endangering or injuring our own immortal interests, because we commit all to Christ. O, what a tide of influence would go forth to subdue the world, to bring it under the willing service of Jesus Christ; how soon would the kingdom of Satan be undermined and destroyed. Satan would fall as lightning from heaven, and the prophecy would soon be verified, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Think you that the Apostles, when they went forth to execute the great commission given them by their blessed Master—that what they did and suffered, was for their own sakes—was in order to get salvation at last? Verily not. They looked to Christ for that, and resting there they had peace; they were freed from

fears of guilt, and went forth to tell to others what they had found for themselves. *The aims and efforts of Christians now should be the same in principle as those of the Apostles.* They lived to the glory of God, and for the interests of Christ. Think you, that saints, when they get to glory, sing God's praise, and serve him continually, with the selfish end of being saved, or keeping themselves in a state of safety? No; they are already saved; they have reached heaven; above the fear of wrath and hell; but *that* does not free them from obligation to love, serve, and adore Jehovah. No, no; the more safe they feel, the deeper and more powerful the obligations they feel under to live wholly to God. So it is, or should be, with the saint on earth; he is not to live to save himself, but live for God's glory, as one already in a state of salvation. He observes ordinances, and performs duties, in order to praise God, extol his goodness, to bless him for all his benefits, and to extend the kingdom of Jesus in the world. If the Apostles, by their zeal for Christ and not for self, accomplished so much, O, what a might of influence would be felt on the ungodly world, if the thousands and millions of professors were true Christians, all engaged in actively promoting the cause of the blessed Saviour?

How many there are, also, who profess to be Christians, and, also, who make no profession, who have no more care than merely to be ready to die! This idea is often countenanced by ministers and others in their exhortations. They have no care about *living* to the glory of God, but merely that they may be happy when they die. What a fatal delusion! Should you not wish to be prepared to *live*, as well as to *die*? Should you not desire to live to God's glory, as well as to die? Are you not under obligations to *live* to him and serve him?

Is not God's design in the conversion of sinners *here*, that they may glorify him *here* as well as *hereafter*? If you have no wish to glorify him on earth, how do you think you will have a desire to glorify him in heaven? You are looking merely to the *happiness* of heaven, and forgetting its *holiness*; and that the *happiness* follows the *holiness*, and does not exist separate from it. Is not God the same God in his perfections when you are on earth, as he is in heaven? Is not Christ presented to you in his love and grace, to draw your attention, and admiration, and gratitude, on earth, as he is to those in heaven? If you have no desire to serve him on earth, O dream not that you would have any desire in heaven. You must believe now, and believing in and trusting in Christ, you are to live now—yes, *now!*—to the praise of God's grace. The love of Christ is to constrain you to live, not to yourself, but to Him who died for you, and who rose again; and while to you to live is Christ, to die will be gain.—Phil. i. 21.

Dear reader, are you observing religious ordinances, and performing religious duties, with the expectation that, *in this way*, you will get salvation at last? O, see your danger, your delusion! It is the Gospel that saves; it is Christ's work, and not your own, that saves. Believe in the Lord Jesus, as he is set forth in the Gospel, and as we have endeavoured to set him forth in this little treatise; and, by trusting to him, you will be free—free from making self your prominent object, and enabled to live to Christ. O, how benevolent the plan of the Gospel! In depending on Christ's work, we may live as much as we please; we may devote our *whole souls* to Christ's cause, and our own eternal interests will not be endangered or injured, by living to Christ and not to ourselves. O, what freedom does this

give ! and well does the Apostle exhort, "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free." Sinner, believe now, and begin now to live to the glory of God. Behold the love of God in Christ, and the love of Christ will constrain you. You will love him, because he first loved you. The preface to the ten commandments was to the effect, that God had brought out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage ; but the preface to the commands of God in reference to his spiritual children is still higher and more powerful: He has brought them out of the city of destruction, and out of the bondage and slavery of Satan. He has turned them from Satan to God ; delivered them from the wrath to come, and they are to "show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

Dear reader, believe in Christ now. "Now is the accepted time ; now is the day of salvation." If you believe not now, you will be compelled at last to believe ; but your faith will be the faith of devils ; you will "believe and tremble." Remember that Gospel light is now shining around you. O come to the light, else if you do not, the light that is around you will turn into a flame which will devour and consume you. It will be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah, for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for you. Flee, then, from the wrath to come. Flee to Jesus. Escape from the city of destruction to the mountain ; yes, to Mount Calvary ; and there you will be safe amid the fire and brimstone which the Lord shall rain upon sinners. "How shall you escape if you neglect so great salvation ?" "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ ; as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God ; *for he hath*

made him who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

In conclusion : It is no doubt true that there is now a fearful responsibility resting on the church for the hiding of the Gospel. The blood of souls is now required at her hand. The church is not executing the great commission of Christ. She is not exemplifying in her opinions and practice the beauties of holiness. She is yet, as a whole, but a distorting medium through which the light of the simple Gospel shines on the world. Sometimes she puts *herself* in betwixt the soul and Christ, sometimes she puts *man* there, sometimes *rites*, sometimes *false doctrines*, and all these tend powerfully and extensively to eclipse Christ and darken souls. O, what need is there for ministers and members to keep Christ and Him crucified prominently before their own attention and the attention of others, for "every one to say to his brother and his neighbour, *know the Lord.*" In preaching the Gospel, ministers must keep the example of Paul more fully and frequently before them, "I was determined," says he, "to know nothing among you, save *Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.*" The great Protestant doctrine of justification by faith alone requires to be come back to. There has been wide departure from it, and a tendency still exists to go still farther from it. There is a great deal of the spirit of popery naturally in human nature, and it is apt to appear in various shapes and phases in all religious societies. It is something congenial to the carnality and pride of the human heart. If salvation could be got by our works, men would strive and labour; but because "it is of faith that it might be by grace," because it is enjoyed by being indebted to another, the carnal heart is unwilling to stoop and take it as a gift; men would rather receive it by coming to

God as *meritorious worshippers*, than as *poor, perishing, hell-deserving sinners*. O, let us pray that the arm of the Lord may be revealed: "Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the ancient days, as in the generations of old." Awake, awake, put on thy strength, O Zion, put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for henceforth there shall not come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem; loose thyself from the bands of thy neck, O captive daughter of Zion.—Isa li. 9—lii. 1, 2.

Believing reader,—While you pray for God's glory in your own sanctification and complete salvation, pray for His glory in the salvation of others, and that this little treatise may be instrumental, under God, in leading sinners to Christ.

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